

**CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCUSSION ON THE NATIONAL
TOURISM GROWTH AND INVESTMENT STRATEGIES
OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT & TOURISM**

BY

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Hon. Speaker, Hon. Members

Namibia is fortunate to be a country that is rich with wildlife, beautiful landscapes and the rare occurrence of both a desert and ocean in one country. It thus obvious that there is immense potential in our tourism industry and if utilized to ensure maximum output tourism industry has the potential to transform the lives of many Namibians.

Unfortunately, like many other industries in Namibia dealing with our valuable natural resources far too much of the industry remains in the hands of foreign nationals. Excluding NWR Resorts, a large amount of Namibian lodges and tourist

*facilities are controlled by foreign nationals.

→ Affordability of these lodges, off season

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It is thus pleasing to note that one of the main objectives of the National Tourism Growth & Investment Strategy is to specifically address local ownership and involvement in the tourism industry. The transformation agenda comes across strongly in the policy documents and one can only hope that this eventually brings about tangible results. My only worry is that the task of overseeing and promoting this localization of the tourism industry is being left in the hands of a body which does not exist yet and effectively amounts to no more than a repackaging and renaming of NACOBTA. Given that NACOBTA has failed to oversee this change, one wonders what has been done to ensure that this new agency will not go the same way and eventually be repackaged and renamed again.

The strategy documents widely speak about the strategic transformation of NWR and that there is a need for NWR to become more financially independent within the next 3 years so that NWR can start generating money for Government instead of relying on bail outs. This goal is welcome, but it is no secret that NWR is in debt with the Development Bank of Namibia (DBN) to the tune of almost N\$ 100 million. What I do not see in these documents is a clear plan to settle this debt, but instead more money-consuming projects are proposed.

For example it is proposed that NWR attempt to purchase competitor lodges in areas where it has none. My question is, where is this money coming from? Should the immediate plan not rather be to stabilize matters before moving into buying extra lodges and facilities?

Should the primary focus of this strategy not have been to oversee the financial transformation of NWR into a self-sustaining profitable entity instead?

Hon. Speaker,

In addition hereto, it is further proposed that ^{MET} ~~NWR~~ should facilitate the establishment of a second domestic airline. Given that Air Namibia is already struggling financially and is heavily reliant on bail outs for its survival, surely ^{MET} ~~NWR~~ through government bringing an additional competitor into the market would only serve to further weaken Air Namibia and decrease any chances it has of becoming a profit-generating airline. I would say that the better proposal would be for ^{MET} ~~NWR~~ and Air Namibia (both GRN-owned agencies) to enter into a cooperation agreement of sorts and not to bring another competitor into a market Air Namibia is already struggling to survive in.

Hon. Speaker, Hon. Members,

Whilst I agree and welcome many of the strategies proposed, one wonders whether the emphasis may not have been misplaced.

Thank You.

