



**Republic of Namibia**

**Response to Notice of Questions**

**by**

**Hon. Bernadus Swartbooi (MP)**

**National Assembly**

**12<sup>th</sup> October 2023**

**Honourable Speaker**  
**Honourable Members**

I rise to provide answers to questions posed by Honourable Bernardus Swartbooi,

**Question 1 has A and B**

**A. We have seen reports and articles highlighting the continued illegal fishing activities on our Northern border. According to industry sources, these alleged illegal fishing activities have been ongoing for at least five to seven years. What exactly is the Ministry doing to address this challenge, which they are fully aware of?**

Thank you, Hon. Swartbooi for the question. It is true that news reports of illegal fishing activities on our northern border have been observed lately.

The Ministry continues to welcome and appreciate the industry or private citizens' collaboration in reporting cases of IUU fishing sightings. It is however important that when reporting these IUU fishing sightings by the industry or private citizens that their reports be detailed enough to enable an effective response.

The Ministry has lately observed that IUU vessels pictures of 2016 are being re-circulated with some of the news articles, but I'm happy to report that the Ministry has noticed positive results in the impact of collaboration with all stakeholders, as the actual last report of suspected IUU fishing was in April 2023, except observations of suspicious case that were reported latest in August 2023.

In response to what the Ministry is doing, the Ministry continues to deploy all available resources to attend to IUU fishing-related activities. The Ministry's normal surveillance program stretches in the whole EEZ, but after IUU information on IUU at the northern border was received, the Ministry adjusted its surveillance program to reduce IUU fishing activities. For the last few years, up to 50% of the patrolling at sea is dedicated to this IUU fishing hotspot to increase presence and deterrence. As a result, we have increased the patrolling vessels from 2 to 3 as from March 2022, this has thus improved monitoring capacity.

This change in approach is bearing fruits when comparing IUU fishing reports over time.

Notably for the purpose of information and appreciation by the Hon Members and the Namibian nation, of the efforts of the Ministry. I have to inform that it costs over N\$ 130,000 a day per patrol vessel to conduct a sea operation. Last year, the Ministry spent over N\$ 70 million to execute the mandate of combating IUU fishing within its territory. This doesn't include the salaries of the fisheries inspectors and all involved.

The Ministry will thus continue to pursue appropriate adaptation to our approach depending on the resources available. Furthermore, the Ministry is also in collaboration with other government agencies in protecting fisheries resources; as such, all sea patrols are carried out jointly with the Namibian Navy Officers and/or Nampol Water Wing Officers on board the fisheries patrol vessels alongside the Fisheries Inspectors.

The Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources also continues to engage neighbouring countries on cases involving vessels flagged or licenced to fish in their waters.

It is indeed true that incidents of intrusion into Namibia waters were reported or detected. In an event when a foreign vessel was identified operating illegally in Namibian Water and cross over into Angolan waters, which is outside Namibian jurisdiction, support is sought from Angolan authority to pursue these vessels further. However, the response and progress on this cooperation depends on the response of the state concerned and to a certain degree becomes a matter of diplomacy. The Honourable Minister has prioritised engaging his Angolan counterpart to establish mechanisms that will enhance our response to apprehend culprits hopping over the border to avoid inspection, as provided for under bilateral and international agreements. Last year, the Ministry undertook a successful joint patrol sea operation with the Republic of Angola, which covered the northern Namibian and southern Angola waters, where 39 (23 in Namibia 16 in Angola) fishing vessels were inspected, of which 9 infringed on the provisions of the relevant country fisheries legislation and were fined.

## **Question 1**

**B. It is also our understanding that one of the alleged pirate vessels, “Sei Whale”, has been licensed to work in Namibia? How is that possible? And to what extent have investigations been launched to verify the veracity of claims?**

Namibia has done its due diligence on MFV Sei Whale and found no proof of her being listed as a pirate vessel or classified as an IUU-listed vessel. Namibia is only aware that the vessel is flagged by an African state.

The Ministry is always vigilant on past fishing activities and vessel ownership to ensure that associating Namibia fishery with such a vessel doesn't tarnish the country's reputation. The Ministry will always ensure that all relevant aspects are considered before licencing vessels to operate in our waters, especially foreign vessels.

## **Question 2**

**2. The Ministry has allowed and is undertaking an experiment of pelagic fishing between the depths of 150 and 200 meters at the request of the pelagic industry. This is also a directive from the Cabinet. Can we get an update on the results of the two-month experiment, which was recently completed?**

The experiment was meant to compare catches inside the 200meter isobaths versus catches at the same time outside the 200 isobath during winter and summer. At the moment only the first phase of winter was completed. The summer phase of this year is still to be conducted. It would therefore be best if the first years' report is compiled after the two seasons of the year are completed to allow the comparison of data.

## **Question 3**

**3. Also, explain to this House why the Ministry of Fisheries only took a two-month experimental run on the pelagic fishing of 150 and 200 meters, while the Cabinet Decision has indicated that the experiment must run for three months?**

The experiment was designed to run for three months in winter and three months in summer for a period of two years only. In fact, the experiment ran from June to August which is three months and not two months. Occasionally, the schedule of the experiment may be modified due to other technical considerations including availability of scientists etc.

#### Question 4

**4. Lastly, do the allegations of large outstanding quota fees and levies of Fishcor Corporation owed to the government hold any content? Such alleged outstanding levies and fees refer to the period of 2017/2018/2019. Meanwhile, if the foregoing is right, how does the Ministry of Fisheries justify the legal requirement imposed upon the private sector companies, which are not allowed to license a vessel unless their levies and fees are fully paid up, while Fishcor seems to be immune, and exempted?**

Firstly, I would like to confirm that fishing companies including FISHCOR have been having difficult times particularly on servicing their financial liabilities with financial institutions while at the same time continuing to incur financial expenses due to costs of operations.

In establishing the National Fishing Corporation of Namibia Pty Limited (**Fishcor**), the Government of the Republic of Namibia intended to provide an economic life-line to the inhabitants of the town of Lüderitz and surrounding areas who have for many years been experiencing economic stagnation as a result of job losses and lack of economic growth.



Therefore, the creation of Fishcor ushered in great prosperity, growth and provided cashflow to those employed by Fishcor and respective businesses within the town of Lüderitz and came as a fresh breeze of fresh air to the socio-economic fabric of the town.

While the Ministry acknowledges that Fishcor remains indebted to the Ministry in unpaid levies and quota fees, withholding its licensing of vessels will create a choke-point not just for the employees of fishcor but will also have serious ramifications for the Town's socio-economic life.

I wish to state that the Ministry is not intending on writing off the debt owed to it by Fishcor but will devise friendlier debt-collecting avenues including but not limited to offering Fishcor flexible re-payment options

I so submit