



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF NAMIBIA

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

BY

HONOURABLE

INGE I. ZAAMWANI, MP

**MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES, WATER AND LAND
REFORM, ON ALLEGATIONS OF ILLEGAL FISHING OF PILCHARD
IN THE NAMIBIAN WATERS.**

Honourable Speaker,

Honourable Members,

I rise to provide information to this August House concerning much publicized allegations of illegal fishing of pilchard.

At the onset I would like to inform this August House and the public that, currently, there is no targeted pilchard fishing taking place owing to a moratorium on pilchard fishing in 2018. This moratorium was necessitated by **three consecutive years of zero biomass**, indicating critically low stock levels. Therefore, the moratorium remains crucial to facilitate the recovery of the pilchard population to biologically sustainable levels. It further underscores the Government's unwavering commitment to the long-term sustainability of Namibia's marine resources.

Honourable Speaker

While recent surveys show a positive recovery trend, with the **current pilchard** stock estimated at **850,000 metric tons**, it remains below the **1-million-metric tons scientific sustainable spawner biomass target**. Given that the pilchard fishery is a relatively short-lived specie, their population is **highly susceptible to environmental factors** that can lead to significant mortality. Thus, ensuring that the

stock reach biologically sustainable levels is crucial to **buffer against these natural fluctuations** and ensure the long-term health of the species.

Concerns regarding Pilchard Bycatch

The Ministry acknowledges concerns raised regarding **pilchard bycatch** and has formerly engaged the fishing industry to express its concern regarding increasing volume of pilchard bycatch. Furthermore, when the Fisheries Observer Agency receives reports concerning alleged vessels involved in the illegal fishing of pilchard, they escalate this to **Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance** for thorough investigation and appropriate action.

In addition, on-board Observers when they observed increased volume of pilchard directed vessels to relocate to alternative fishing grounds, and these directives have been complied with. However, despite our efforts, a notable number of vessels catching pilchard persists across various areas, which underscores the complexities of bycatch management.

Honourable Speaker,

The observable increase in pilchard landings offers reasonable grounds to suggest that this bycatch may not always be unintentional, but rather **a deliberate act**. This directly impacts the recovery efforts for this crucial species, and we have expressly communicated this to the Fishing Industry.

Strengthening Fisheries Compliance

Honourable Speaker

Honourable Members

It is reasonable to state that current enforcement measures and associated penalties are proving insufficient to deter illegal fishing of pilchard. The Ministry is, therefore, actively exploring a range of measures to enhance compliance within our fisheries subsector. These include, but are not limited to, revision of the current moratorium, implementing stricter bycatch limits, revising the landed value of species to deter pilchard bycatch, deploying more advanced monitoring and surveillance systems, and a significant revision of the current penalty regime to introduce tougher penalties for non-compliance. In addition, the Ministry plan to consult internally with our scientist with a view to conduct targeted pilchard stock assessment to determine the biomass. These efforts are designed to ensure that bycatch regulations are respected

and that the recovery of Namibia's pilchard stock is not compromised. I urge all industry stakeholders to support these efforts for the best interest of our nation.

In conclusion, Honorable Speaker, I assure this August House and the Namibian people that, the Ministry remains steadfast in its commitment to sustainable fisheries management. I am confident that these proactive steps will contribute significantly to the long-term health and sustainability of our marine ecosystem.

The Ministry will continue to closely monitor the situation and ensure adherence to the regulations and current measures.

I thank you, Honourable Speaker