



## REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

### MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND TOURISM

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#### **PRESS STATEMENT** *(for immediate release)*

#### **MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND TOURISM (MEFT) REACTION ON THE BRIEFING PAPER ON “DEPLETING NATURAL CAPITAL, HOW NAMIBIA HAS BEEN LOSING WILDLIFE, FORESTS AND SAND THROUGH MIS- GOVERNANCY AND MALADMINISTRATION SINCE 2015”**

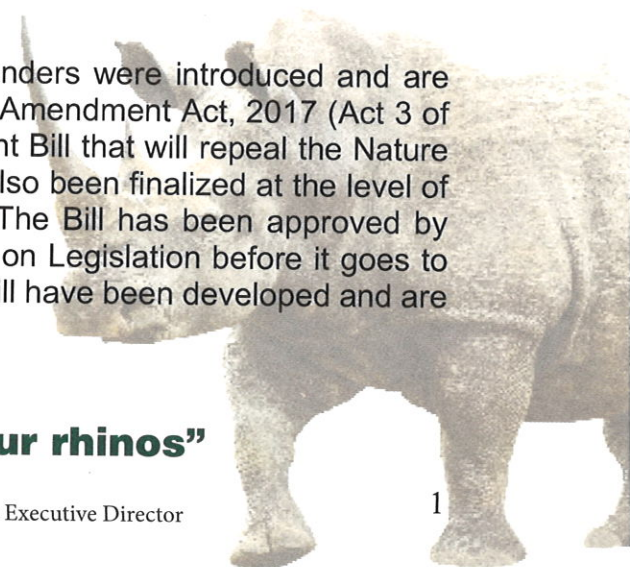
The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism is issuing this press statement in response to the recently published Institute for Public Policy Research and Hanns Seidel Foundation Briefing Paper on “Depleting natural capital, How Namibia has been losing wildlife, forests and sand through mis-governance and maladministration since 2015”.

The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism refutes the majority of content and opinions asserted in the briefing paper, which fails to acknowledge the efforts of the Ministry and broader Government in addressing these critical challenges. It is further unfortunate that the briefing paper is characterized by a lack of research and in-depth statistical analysis, which makes many of the observations and recommendations unfounded, inaccurate and misleading.

With regard to poaching, it is notable that the poaching of high value wildlife species has shown a marked decline since peaking in 2015 /16. These figures are publicly available and we thankfully continue to observe this downward trend so far in 2020. This is largely due to the commitment and multi-faceted measures put in place in the fight against wildlife crime.

Stiffer punishments and sentences for poaching offenders were introduced and are being implemented through the Nature Conservation Amendment Act, 2017 (Act 3 of 2017). The Wildlife and Protected Areas Management Bill that will repeal the Nature Conservation Ordinance, 1975 (Ord. 4 of 1975) has also been finalized at the level of the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism. The Bill has been approved by Cabinet and is currently with the Cabinet Committee on Legislation before it goes to Parliament. The first draft of the Regulations for this Bill have been developed and are currently undergoing public consultations.

**“Stop the poaching of our rhinos”**





It is incorrectly stated that the Ministry has not adopted the National Strategy on Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement. The Ministry and its stakeholders are currently implementing the National Strategy on Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement for 2015-2020. Stakeholder consultations for a revised strategy for the period 2021-2026 have already been completed, and the strategy is currently with the Ministerial Committee on Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement before it is submitted to Cabinet for approval.

The Ministry has also regularly reported increasing numbers of arrests and prosecutions linked to poaching activities and illegal possession of game products, which points to improved intelligence, active prevention of poaching and the successful investigation of incidents. Indeed many of the recent successes in fighting wildlife crime in Namibia are the result of good governance, improved patrols, better collaboration between stakeholders and rapid, proactive responses to incidents.

With regard to the "sand mining saga" referred to in the report, it should be noted that unregulated sand mining is a challenge that has faced Namibia for decades. It is through the implementation of the Environmental Management Act of 2007 (Act No. 7 of 2007) that this Ministry has drawn attention to this challenge and begun to take measures to address it. It is recognized that this is a complex challenge that requires a delicate balance between environmental protection, community well-being and local development. It is also a challenge that involves a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties.

For this reason, the Ministry has followed a highly consultative approach to tackling this challenge by reaching out to key stakeholders across the country, especially Regional Councils, Local and Traditional Authorities, business persons and local communities. The Ministry has also engaged the media to educate the public on need for all sand mining operations to have an environmental clearance certificate as well as on the consultative process required to obtain this clearance.

The Ministry has taken decisive action to stop all illegal sand mining operations and a number of culprits have been issued with compliance orders. Some of the cases are currently being dealt with by the courts while others are under appeal. There is currently no illegal sand mining taking place in Namibia as all the sites are either appropriately duly authorized or are in the process of being authorized.

A new approach is now being implemented to better regulate sand mining operations. The Ministry is now only issuing environmental clearance certificates for sand mining operations through entities such as Traditional Authorities, Local Authorities and Regional Councils. This has improved coordination and communication between the different levels of government and individuals and businesses can now only mine sand once they have been awarded with sand mining permits at a fee for a specific amount of sand. The Ministry has also introduced standard procedures when applying for an environmental clearance certificate for sand mining operations as well as standard conditions to the environmental clearance certificate which also promote increased community beneficiation from sand mining.

It is further notable also that the Ministry has engaged a number of companies responsible for sand mining with regard to rehabilitating their pits in order to ensure environmental protection and the safety of humans and animals alike. In 2019, the Roads Authority jointly launched with the Ministry a project to rehabilitate 119 borrow pits used in the past to build roads in the Ohangwena Region. It is expected that similar rehabilitation projects will also be undertaken in other regions through the Roads Authority and other stakeholders.

Lastly when it comes to illegal and unregulated logging, the Ministry is not abdicating its regulatory role and has stepped up its efforts to enforce both the Environmental Management Act of 2007 (Act No. 7 of 2007) and Forestry Act of 2001 (Act No. 12 of 2001) in addressing this issue. Decisive measures have been taken including the suspension of the harvesting, transport, marketing and export of timber harvesting since 26 November 2018.

The issuance of transport permits for already harvested timber is now allowed however it must be destined for the local market and no export permits are issued for unprocessed timber. The stimulation of local demand and markets as well as facilities for processing timber products is a continued ongoing priority of Government. The claim that Namibia has become a conduit in the illicit, cross-border trade in African timber is also unfair and untrue. Namibia being a logistic hub in the region, this cross-border trade of goods should be promoted and facilitated. All required documentation are checked at port of entry by relevant authorities.

Overall it is unfortunate that the Institute for Public Policy Research and Hanns Seidel Foundation did not consult the Ministry in the drafting of this briefing paper and the Ministry strongly denies the allegation that the Namibian authorities are playing a significant part in the destruction of our natural capital through inaction or enablement.

The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism remains committed to ensuring the sustainable utilization of our natural resources for the present and future generations of Namibians as set out in Article 95 (L) of the Constitution and is open to constructive dialogue and collaborative action on how best to give effect to this provision with respect to the management of our natural resources.

*Issued by:*

  
Teofilus Nkhoma  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**