



**KEYNOTE STATEMENT
BY**

**Hon. Pohamba Shifeta, MP
MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND TOURISM**

**At the occasion of the launch of the Support to the Kavango-Zambezi
Transfrontier Conservation Area for Sustainable Wildlife Management
(ACT-KaZa) Project**

09.00-11:00 on 12th May 2021 at Avani Hotel, Windhoek

Director of Ceremonies, Mr Bennett Kahuure, Director of Wildlife and National Parks;

His Excellency Mr. Sébastien Minot, French Ambassador to Namibia;

Her Excellency Ms. Gosia Lachut, Deputy Head of the EU Delegation to Namibia;

Her Excellency Ms. Jovelina Imperial E Costa, Angolan Ambassador to Namibia

His Excellency Dr. Batlang Comma Serema, High Commissioner of Botswana to Namibia

Her Excellency Ms. Stella Libongani, High Commissioner of Zambia to Namibia

Her Excellency Mrs. Rofina Ndakaziva Chikava, Ambassador of Zimbabwe to Namibia

Ms. Farayi Zimudzi - FAO Representative to Namibia

Mr. Teofilus Nghitila, Executive Director of the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism;

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Distinguished Representatives of the Communal Conservancies and Community Associations;

Distinguished invited guests;

Members of the media;

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my distinct pleasure to be with you all this morning and to provide the keynote address at the official launch of the Support to the Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area for Sustainable Wildlife Management Project in Namibia.

At the onset allow me to thank the distinguished presenters and speakers that came before me and explained this project and its benefits so well.

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Namibia, we are delighted and honoured to be one of the 15 pilot countries included in the Sustainable Wildlife Management Programme. The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism is genuinely excited by the components of this project as they fit very well with Government priorities for the sustainable utilization of wildlife for the benefit of our local communities, prevention and mitigation of human wildlife conflict and strengthening the compliance of communal conservancies to standards of good governance.

Director of Ceremonies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Covering nearly 520,000 km², the KAZA TFCA is the largest transfrontier conservation area in the world and comprises more than 20 National Parks, 85 Forest Reserves, 22 Conservancies, 11 Sanctuaries, 103 Wildlife Management Areas and 11 Game Management Areas (GMAs). As such it is a biologically rich area that is of global biological significance. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the representatives of the Governments of Angola, Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe, our local communities and our partners for their immense efforts in conserving this area and pledge Namibia's continued commitment to be at the forefront of this important process.

Community level conservation, founded on both the consumptive and non-consumptive use of wildlife is key to the future development of the KAZA TFCA. The Zambezi Region is home to some of Namibia's oldest communal conservancies and almost a quarter of Namibia's 86 communal conservancies are found in or adjacent to the KAZA TFCA. Managing the existing wildlife in these areas at sustainable levels and for the improvement of food security and livelihood opportunities of the local populations is a key element of this Project. The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism is particularly pleased by the growing recognition of the importance and value of sustainably harvested

game meat, which is very much evident in this project. Game meat has always been symbolically important for traditional festivals and it is relished as a household source of protein.

Given the changing climates across the region and the need for improved self-reliance that has been highlighted in this Covid-19 pandemic, there is a strong rationale for Namibia to produce more game meat and to add more value to this resource in the future. The resultant income and employment benefits will increase the financial viability of communal conservancies and facilitate further investments in communal conservancies. The Ministry is committed to continue to support communal conservancies to enter into partnerships relating to tourism and hunting products, as this will make wildlife management as a land use more viable and desirable with local communities.

Director of Ceremonies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Ministry welcomes the institutional support that will be rendered to communal conservancies through this project. It is vital that good governance and sound financial management become strengthened in conservancies. Conservancy managers and Ministry staff are already working together to

ensure the following 5 key intervention measures for good governance are implemented:

1. All conservancies must hold Annual General Meetings according to constitutions.
2. All conservancies must ensure that Conservancy Committees are elected according to terms of office and implement conservancy activities accordingly.
3. Financial management is monitored in conservancies and that all conservancies produce financial reports.
4. All conservancies must have and implement Benefit Distribution Plans.
5. All conservancies must have and implement Game Utilization Plans.

Director of Ceremonies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The KAZA TFCA is also unquestionably a hotspot area for human wildlife conflict in Namibia. Of the 1,486 incidents of human wildlife conflict reported to the Ministry in the 2020/21 financial year, 585 (or 39.4% of all incidents) came from the regions of Kavango East, Kavango West and Zambezi. The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism is doing all it can to prevent and mitigate the damage caused by this challenge. We are therefore pleased with the

corridor element of this project. It is indeed quite unique and innovative, as it seeks to use communal conservancies as strategic building blocks to identify and manage key wildlife corridors so wildlife can freely move between these conservancies, protected areas and our neighbouring countries. This regional dimension is in line with the KAZA vision, and the project will provide an excellent opportunity to pilot such critical corridor work at multiple scales.

In conclusion, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism looks forward to working closely with all partners and particularly the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Wildlife Fund in the implementation of this project. I furthermore thank you for your respective roles and hard work in bringing this project to fruition.

Finally, allow me to express my sincere thanks to the French Government and the French Development Agency, the European Commission and all other partners for their commitment and support to the Sustainable Wildlife Management Programme and this particular project.

I thank you for your kind attention.