



## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

### **ON THE ALLEGED HARVESTING AND TRANSPORTATION OF TIMBER**

**Honourable Pohamba Shifeta, MP**

**Minister of Environment, Forestry and Tourism**

**3rd March 2021**

Honourable Speaker  
Honourable Members

I rise to clarify and reiterate the Ministry's position on the exportation of unprocessed or semi processed timber from Namibia.

I shall specifically address the issue of whether the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) is still issuing harvesting and export permits and environmental clearance certificates for timber from Namibia.

It is true that issues of timber harvesting have been prevailing in the local media over the past three years. On several occasions, I personally, as the Minister responsible for Environment, Forestry and Tourism, have briefed this august House on these matters. I have repeatedly stressed the need for the conservation and sustainable utilization of our hardwood forests and outlined the measures we have put in place to control the illegal harvesting, transport and export of timber.

I am strongly confident that these measures have brought most illegal timber harvesting operations to an end.

Hon. Members,

By way of background, it is now well-known that before mid 2018 a number of farm owners / land occupiers in the Kavango East, Kavango West and Zambezi regions were authorized through licences/permits issued by the Directorate of Forestry to harvest

timber from the land they occupy with the main objective of generating income and developing their farms in order to make meaningful livelihoods from such land. These were arrangements made between the Farmers and the then Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry.

Although the licences were indeed issued by the Forestry Authority then, it was established that there were some aspects of both the Forest Act of 2001 (Act No. 12 of 2001) and the Environmental Management Act of 2007 (Act No. 7 of 2007) that were not followed. We discovered that there was no environmental clearance certificates issued for harvesting, transporting and exporting of timber from Namibia.

I must reiterate my previous contention that at this moment it is not legally permissible to export unprocessed or semi processed timber in Namibia.

When this issue was brought to the attention of the then Ministry of Environment and Tourism we initiated a consultation between the two ministries (then MET and MAWF). The consultation resulted in agreement of suspending the issuance of all timber harvesting permits on 26 November 2018.

Since then, no timber harvesting permits were issued by the Forestry authority in Namibia. In addition, officials from the Directorate of Forestry, our Anti-Poaching Unit and the law enforcement agencies have stepped up collaboration to ensure more sustained inspections, patrols and checks, both at source

and at transit points. These efforts continue in spite of the limited resources available.

Honourable Speaker,  
Honourable Members,

Although there was a time that export permits were issued to allow the already harvested timber to be transported both internally and for export, the MEFT issued a press release on 15 July 2020 clearly stipulating that no **unprocessed** or semi processed timber is to be exported from Namibia.

Since then, Namibia authorized the exportation of only processed products, including planks of not more than 5cm thick. Many of the timber traders found that the given plank size does not fit with their required product specification and therefore very few of them have been applying to export containers of processed planks.

Since July 2020, we have recorded only eight (8) containers of already processed planks from Namibian origin (forests) exported through Walvis Bay.

I am pleased to inform this August house that there are some Namibian timber processors who have taken up the call to process timber at local level. There is now an operational timber factory at Rundu, run by local operators from the region. Others are Mbangura group in Rundu, Mr. Ndumba in Rundu, Mr. George Shikongo in Rundu, Mr. Leroy Mokgane Nkurenkuru/Katwitwi. The capacity of this one only process the up to the plank product.

In addition, there is now a few more Namibian based Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) dealing with timber processing and furniture production in other areas including in Tsumeb, Ondangwa, Keetmanshoop and Leonardville.

It is encouraging to note that a locally based wood industry is now developing. We are further working with the Ministry of Trade and Industrialization and the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture to ensure greater value addition and value chain development of the local timber industry.

Honourable Speaker,  
Honourable Members,

It is important to note that, in line with our position as a logistics hub for the sub-region, timber in different forms continues to be transported through Namibia from other countries using our ports, in particular via Walvis Bay for onward export.

The majority of this timber originates from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Zambia and Angola and arrives in Namibia via the Katima Mulilo (Wenela) border post and the Katwitwi border post, respectively.

Since July 2020, more than three hundred (300) trucks entered Namibia, and the Forestry Authority in Namibia facilitated the smooth movement of these trucks by issuing the necessary transit permits.

In total, 994 permits were issued at the Katima Mulilo Forest Office, with 947 of these permits being for timber coming from Zambia and 47 for timber coming from the DRC. Two permits were issued at Nkurenkuru Forestry Office for trucks coming from Angola.

In total 1,397 timber containers from neighboring countries used our port of Walvis Bay from July 2020 to February 2021 and distributed as follows:

- 1)Angola 49 containers,
- 2)Democratic Republic of Congo 47 containers,
- 3)Zambia 1,301 containers

Finally, I would like to reassure you, Hon. Members, that the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism vowed not to permit an export of unprocessed or semi processed timber from Namibia.

Besides this, the Ministry is busy amending the Forestry Act, 12 of 2001 and its Regulations to further strengthen them and close the potential lacunae in the law.

**I thank you for your attention.**