



**NAMWATER CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER SPEECH DURING
THE COMMEMORATION OF WORLD WETLANDS DAY,
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FORESTS AND WORLD WATER
DAY.**

**PLACE OANOB DAM, REHOBOTH
DATE 15 MARCH 2019**

Director of Ceremonies

Hon. Alfeus Naruseb, Minister of Agriculture, Water and Forestry

Honorable Lucia Basson, Governor of Hardap Region

Mr. Percy Msiska, Executive Director, Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry

Representatives from Government Ministries and SOEs,

Representatives from the Private Sector,

Representatives from Non-Governmental Organisations,

School learners,

Our sponsors for the event,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen!

I, and indeed NamWater, am honoured and excited to be part of the celebration of the World Wetlands Day, the International Day of Forests and the World Water Day. We are joining Namibia and the rest of the international communities in remembering these three important days which are celebrated each year on the 02 February for World Wetlands Day, 21 March for the International Day of Forests and 22 March for the World Water Day, under their respective themes reflecting the importance

The theme for WWD 2019 is “**Wetlands and climate change**”, aiming at highlighting the important role played by wetlands, as natural solutions, in adapting to, and mitigating the impact of climate change. Nowadays, the economy, human health and natural ecosystems are facing one of the most pressing phenomenon: climate change. Wetland ecosystems are severely affected by such impacts of climate change resulting in sea level

rise, coral bleaching, hydrological effects, changes in water temperature, and alterations in water quantity and quality.

This year, the International Day of Forests (IDF) addresses the theme, **‘Forests and Education.’** It seeks to raise awareness on how sustainably managed forests provide a wide array of contributions in this area.

As for the World Water Day, the theme for this year is 'Leaving no one behind'. World Water Day reminds people about the significance of fresh water and promotes sustainability for fresh water resources' management. It is a day to prepare for how we manage water in the future. When the 2030 Agenda was adopted in 2015 by the UN, all countries and stakeholders set out an ambitious agenda envisaging a world free of poverty, hunger and disease. A world where all life can thrive and where no one is left behind.

At a time of immense global challenges – poverty, inequalities, natural disasters, humanitarian crises and forced displacement – the 2019 edition of World Water Day looks at why people have been left behind and how access to water and sanitation and sustainable water management can be drivers of change so that we have water for all.

Water for all implies that also elderly, disabled, marginalized and poor people get access to clean drinking water and proper sanitation, as is meant with universal access in Sustainable Development Goals.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!

I was asked to talk more about the significance of the Wetlands around this place where we are today. We have important wetlands, which have served as sources of water not only for the town of Rehoboth and the

amazing Camel Thorn Forest (the biggest in Southern Africa), but for all the living organisms as well.

The most obvious wetland around here is the Oanob River. It is the main source of water supply through its inflow into the dam as well as the ground water kept in its alluvial aquifer.

The Oanob Dam is located on the Oanob River approximately 7 kilometres northwest of the town of Rehoboth. The construction of the dam was completed in 1990, the year of Namibia's Independence. The surface area of the dam is 3,603 km² and it has a capacity of 34.505 Mm³. About 18 % of the water from the dam is evaporated every year.

Prior to the construction of the dam and the purification plant, Rehoboth relied on 13 boreholes in the Oanob aquifer which had the production capacity of 230m³/h, while the town demand at the time was around 200m³/h. The decision to build the dam was thus a proactive approach to

meet the future demand and to ensure that development in this area is stimulated and that Rehoboth remains a centre of growth. The Purification Plant which is operated by NamWater is situated about 4 kilometres from the Oanob Dam. The water from the dam is treated using a conventional purification process. The purification plant has a design capacity of 720 m³/h and is operated 8 hours daily. Water from the dam is pumped into three reservoirs situated in the town and this plant continues to meet the demand for the Rehoboth, which currently stands at 5000m³ per day.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, IN CONCLUSION,

I would like to remind you again, and especially the learners, that the enormously valuable wetland functions offer solid evidence that investing in natural solutions is a cost-effective way to enhance the resilience to climate change for vulnerable areas and communities. We should encourage increased public awareness on the importance of wetlands, as

well as stakeholder participation in their management, for maintaining human well-being. We should also encourage our lawmakers to strengthen national legal and policy arrangements to conserve all wetlands and develop and implement adaptation strategies for coastal and inland wetlands to minimize the impacts of climate change. Coastal and unprotected wetlands are expected to be severely impacted by climate change, but conserving and restoring wetlands is a very effective way to mitigate climate change impacts for people and biodiversity.

And finally let us all, especially the young generation, the future of our world, strive to ensure that everyone has access to water and sanitation and let us encourage and maintain sustainable water management to be the driver of change so that we have water for everyone.

I WISH YOU ALL A HAPPY CELEBRATION!