



## **REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

**Official Statement By Alpheus G. !Naruseb, MP, and Minister of Agriculture, Water and Forestry at the occasion of the sending of the first consignment of beef to the People's Republic of China.**

**Director of Ceremonies Mr. Mushokobanji Mwilima**

**Mr. Yang Jun, Chargé d'Affaires - Embassy of the People's Republic of China to Namibia**

**Mr D from China Central – our first client**

**Representative of the Chinese Embassy in Namibia**

**Dr. Martha Nambundjebo Tilahun- Chairperson of the MEATCO Board**

**Officials of the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry**

**Distinguished Guests**

**Media Houses representative**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

**Good Morning,**

Namibia and China continue to enjoy cordial bilateral political and diplomatic relations. These relations between our two countries date back to the years of the struggle for the liberation and political Independence of Namibia when the Government of the People's Republic of China took a bold decision to provide all round political and material support to our ruling Party SWAPO. Allow me therefore at this juncture to reiterate our appreciation and profound gratitude for this unforgettable support. We should continue to harness these relations in order to solidify and cement our economic and technical cooperation, which have been growing from strength to strength since the Independence of Namibia.

It is precisely because of the excellent relations that I referred to earlier that the Government of the Republic of Namibia and Government of the People's Republic of China agreed to trade in beef and agriculture in general.

## **Director of Ceremonies;**

Allow me to extend a special Namibian welcome to Mr D from China Central who is our first client in the People's Republic of China for flying half way across the world to join us at this momentous occasion. Your presence Sir, is clear testament of your commitment to a fruitful relationship between your company, your clients, MEATCO and the Namibian Producers.

The occasion of the first consignment we are witnessing today symbolises a major milestone in the drive to diversify the livestock sector and by extension the Agricultural sector of Namibia and a tangible achievement for our drive towards local value addition and growth at home.

At this occasion, it is indeed appropriate to remember that this ambition to get Namibian beef on the Plates of Chinese clients was a long journey that started as far back as 2005 and was filled with challenges and on occasion a sense of despondency.

At the time we started negotiations for market access of Namibian beef, no other African country had ever exported beef to the PRC despite the fact that this is the world's biggest consumer market for this commodity. It was therefore an ambitious undertaking for Namibia, a country with 2,4 million cattle and competing for a share in a market claimed and defended by the developed beef producing countries of the world. As expected therefore, it was a long and tedious negotiation process to find Sanitary and Phytosanitary conditions acceptable to PRC and implementable by the Namibian producer and the veterinary authorities. We had to work hard to convince our counterparts that Namibia is in Africa but have an FMD free zone, well managed Animal Health Controls and most importantly can produce the best quality beef comparable to the

best in the world. Eventually an Agreement on Animal Health and Quarantine was signed in 2011, which was really a compromise on the most difficult issue that being the absence of lumpy skin disease (LSD) in the FMD free zone. Further audits and inspections took place after that and eventually MEATCO was listed on AQSIQ as an authorised importer in 2014.

As luck or the lack thereof would have it, Just before we could pop the champagne, we experienced a devastating outbreak of Lumpy Skin Disease in the Omaheke and Otjosondjupa Region thus completely nullifying all efforts made up to that point. This send us back to the negotiating table. In true testament to the difficulty in give and take negotiations it took us a further 3 years to get what we believed to be a break through on the LSD issue and on 29 March 2018, I signed a Protocol with my counterpart in Beijing.

**Master of ceremonies;**

**Ladies and gentlemen;**

This occasion is therefore as important as it is symbolic. Looking back we have to rest for a short time and collectively pat ourselves on the back on both sides for the efforts made and for our determination to succeed. We should however not rest to long because we are starting a new phase in this journey in which we are practically putting our reputation and fortune on the line for international Public scrutiny, whether we are indeed a reliable and trustworthy trading partner.

This phase, requires our collective determination and action to ensure that team Namibia plays the trade game on the same side, in a coordinated manner and determined to win. I therefore call on all role players, the producers, Government Officials, MEATCO and the media to take the hand of our clients in China and around the world

to bring this beef which we are all so proud of to their tables and make them proud of our beef.

I urge all role players to work towards this noble objective and set aside petty differences for our greater good. The task in front of us is challenging but united we shall ensure that this market remains sustainable and available to our future generations.

**Master of ceremonies;**

**Ladies and gentlemen;**

On this important occasion let us also not forget that the livestock sector remains divided and that the majority of our livestock sit north of the Veterinary Cordon Fence without access to these and other lucrative markets. The status quo can and should not be allowed to continue indefinitely. The same energy determination should be deployed by all stakeholders to find a practical and sustainable solution to the VCF without destroying our livestock sector. This must be done and it must be done as soon as possible because the Nation expects it and demands for it.

Finally let me take this opportunity to thank all role players past and present who made this joyous occasion possible. It is indeed humbling to add to the narrative of south-south cooperation and yet another milestone in the growing and blossoming relationship between the People's Republic of China and Namibia. I wish to specifically thank the Ambassador and the staff of the Embassies of PRC to Namibia and in their absence the Namibian Embassy to China for fostering this positive outcome.

This first consignment is irrefutable proof that the relationship between PRC and Namibia is one of give and take, is mutually

beneficial and is open for our respective business people to take full advantage of for our common prosperity.

I challenge the Namibian entrepreneurs and business people to see the opportunities in this and all other initiatives brought forth through Government to Government interactions such as this one.

Thank you