



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

POLICY STATEMENT DELIVERED BY JOHN MUTORWA, MP AND MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, WATER AND FORESTRY (MAWF), DURING THE COMMEMORATION OF WORLD WETLANDS DAY AND WORLD WATER DAY, ON THURSDAY, 23 MARCH 2017, AT THE ZOO PARK, WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA.

1. Permit me to commence my statement by defining the important words that underline today's activities:

a) WETLANDS

“Swampy or marshy land” a swamp is an area of waterlogged ground. If used as a verb, the word swamp refers to a state of being flooded with water. A marsh is an area of low-lying land, which is flooded in wet seasons or at high tide.

b) WATER

“The liquid which forms the seas, lakes, rivers and rain”. It is the basis of the fluids of living organisms.

c) COMMEMORATION

From Latin: Commemorare, which means, bring to remembrance. To commemorate means: to honour, respect the memory of somebody or something, as a mark of respect, especially with a ceremony or memorial.

2. As human beings, the world over, we must commemorate both **WETLANDS** and **WATER,** to highlight the most important indispensable roles, that both wetlands and water play in the ecosystem and in biodiversity, that is: **in life itself!** We must also commemorate the wetlands and water, to remind

ourselves, as human beings, about the increasing, both positive and negative pressures, that we are putting on the God given fresh water and wetlands resources. Through such commemoration, we want to enhance and strengthen our (human beings') understanding about the best possible and acceptable way to prudently, rationally and sustainably manage and utilize this life-giving and life sustaining natural resource, called **WATER**.

3. Today, we are jointly commemorating these two days under the theme: **“Healthy Wetlands and innovative water and wastewater management for improved livelihoods”**. This theme concurs well, with the current situation being experienced in our country, Namibia, “the Land of the Brave!”
4. The theme was selected to create awareness with regard to the vital roles that: healthy wetlands play, in reducing the impacts of natural disasters such as floods, droughts and cyclones on communities. It also provides an important opportunity, to highlight the symbiosis or inter-dependence between freshwater and wastewater, in the quest for sustainable development and security of supply. For centuries, wastewater has been regarded as yuck or nothing; was seen as a threat to freshwater resources and wastewater treatment facilities were perceived as unhygienic and bleeding ground for pests such as mosquitoes. This perception could be attributed to poor management and improper disposal of wastewater. Efficient and scientific innovative wastewater treatment and management can transform this untapped resource to augment or to increase the rapidly depleting freshwater resources.
5. Namibia is one of the few countries around the globe and Windhoek is so far, the only City on the African Continent, that treats its wastewater effluents to potable quality. This endeavour is commendable, as it contributes to Vision 2030 objective which states: **“Namibia’s fresh water resources are kept free of pollution and are used to ensure social well-being, support economic development and to maintain natural habitats”**; and it promotes public health. Wastewater is a valuable resource in any circular of economy and its safe management and disposal is an investment in the health of humans and ecosystems, in line with the principles of integrated water resources management (IWRM). Therefore, wastewater re-use, recycle and reclaim should be promoted, to reduce the demand for freshwater and alleviate the pressure on the already stressed water resources, to also reduce

environmental pollution, and diseases associated with poor and lack of wastewater treatment and management.

6. The commemoration of World Wetlands/Water Day provides an opportunity to raise awareness and change mindsets, towards water saving, especially in times of serious water scarcity.
7. The past few years have been challenging in respect to water provision. The country underwent a succession of dry years, which not only threatened our livelihoods, but the country's economy, most specifically in the central areas, central coastal areas and southern parts of Namibia, where we were facing challenges to supply adequate and potable water for drinking and economic activities. Although this year, 2017, good rains have been received over most parts of the country, the nature of our climatic conditions leaves us vulnerable and shall continue to be the case.
8. In the Namibian context, water security is not only being threatened by increased demand for water, which in some areas has outstripped supply, but water security is further threatened by climate change and climate variability as well as water use inefficiency. As a commitment to national water security. His Excellency, the President of Namibia, established the Cabinet Committee on Water Supply Security (CCWSS) to address water security issues country-wide.
9. In an attempt to keep the taps running, non-conventional sources of water such as the artificial recharge of ground water; desalination of sea water, as well as reclamation and re-use of waste water for suitable purposes, have been explored and implemented in some parts of the country. Other options such as drawing water from the Kavango River, is still being considered, as well. However, all these options are not immediate and could be very costly and at all times involve adhering to International Protocols and require cooperation with other Riparian States. Equally it is unsustainable to keep chasing and supplying the demand because freshwater resources are finite and can be depleted.
10. What we can do and must do in the short term is: to ensure that the limited available water is used efficiently and wisely. We must employ efficient water demand management techniques, and avoid unnecessary wastages of this scarce resource. Let us educate our children and ourselves to use water

wisely, adopt innovative ways to ensure that the available limited water generates the desired maximum benefits for a much longer period than anticipated.

11. A National Water Saving Campaign was launched last year in 2016, to create awareness about water saving and water use efficiency, particularly in Government or public institutions, where enormous amount of water is wasted, as a result of leaks that remain unfixed for long time; as well attitude and behavior of public service employees, towards water use in work places. In order to put public institutions in charge of their water affairs, Cabinet, among others, approved the appointment of Water Marshalls who have been trained on leak identification, water meter reading, water consumption determination in order to reduce water wastage and save government millions of dollars in utility (water) bills.
12. Each and every one of us has the responsibility to rethink our lifestyles and the impact it has, on the water and wetland resources. We need to continuously ask ourselves, whether our water use attitudes are sustainable or not. Remember the saying: it is not only one's APTITUDE that will or can determine the ALTITUDE that one may reach in life; but it is more one's ATTITUDE. I particularly appreciate the participation of the youth in this annual water awareness raising campaign. Their youthful enthusiasm and fresh perspectives are invaluable assets, that will assist in finding sustainable solutions to our water dilemma. This is the moment when we should join hands and take important steps to find lasting solutions to address water issues based on cooperation, mutual understanding; scientific as well as recognition of indigenous knowledge.
13. It is, indeed, heart-warming and I am most grateful to observe that this occasion fosters cooperation between Government Ministries; the State Owned Enterprises and Non-Governmental Organisations; International Cooperating Partners, Private Entities and the National Water Basin Committees, as well as the Local Communities. Your presence, at this event, re-affirms your strong commitment to sustainably manage and utilize our precious water and wetlands resources. Your continuous efforts and support towards Water Resources Management is well acknowledged and appreciated. Efficient and sustainable management of water cannot be left in the hands of Government, NamWater, Regional and Local Authorities alone.

Every citizen of Namibia, industries, the private sector, civil society and Non-Governmental Organizations all have a role to play. Every water user is a water manager! Let's all join hands in managing our precious life giving and life sustaining resource **WATER**.

14. Please, accept and convey to all, the GRN's most deepest gratitude and sincere thanks.

Thank you all for your attention.