

MEDIA STATEMENT

MAWF'S REACTION TO THE EDITORIAL, IN THE NAMIBIAN SUN NEWSPAPER OF 06 JANUARY 2017, WITH REGARD TO WATER INFLOW INTO AND USE IN THE VON BACH DAM CATCHMENT.

1. An editorial titled “*Let good rain not infuse complacency*” was placed in the Namibian Sun newspaper of 6th January 2017, with the following allegations:
 - i) That the Von Bach Dam had only 3% inflow, because the farmers along the catchment area, are diverting our most precious national resource-water.
 - ii) That the political authorities are yet to make any contingency plan in case the water resources run dry.
 - iii) That plans are made and not implemented and that the only thing that would spur any of our “illustrious political elite” into action and/or blitzkrieg implementation is, if they, or their direct family members, or their friends stand to benefit from the said venture, be it desalination, construction or whatever.
 - iv) That despite good rains, there has been no good inflow into our main supply dam – largely due to the negligence of “our illustrious political elite” and their lack of action regarding water that is siphoned of illegally by farmers.
 - v) The editorial went further to say that: perhaps the farmers have become friends of the political elite and perhaps they are even renting the rights to siphon the water since people are greedy and eager to make fast buck – even to the detriment of others.

2. The Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MAWF) being the custodian of water resources in the country, has taken the said serious and unjustified allegations in the said editorial very seriously and cannot stand by and watch the Namibian Nation being fed with untrue, injurious and unreliable information. Therefore, the following are clarifications, stating the facts as opposed to unsubstantiated allegations in the said editorial of the Namibian Sun newspaper which in fact are bordering on defamation of characters.
 - 2.1. The Editor Mr Nakatana was directly approached, to provide factual evidence about a farmer or farmers whom he or his fellow reporters have visited and found them with facilities that siphon water from the catchment. He could not provide such evidence (see his email response **Annexure 1**).

 - 2.2. There are many factors why not every rain drop that falls within the catchment area may not find its way into the dam such as seepage, evaporation, bush encroachment that inhibits run-off. The fact that only 3% reached the dam does not mean that some water was siphoned. One

wonders what percentage the editor expected to be in the dam and what formula was used to determine such assumption.

- 2.3. A moratorium has been put in place in 1990 by the Department of Water Affairs, that prohibits issuing of licences to build dams, within the catchments of the National Dams (see Memorandum on policy for approval of farm dams in catchments of state dams **Annexure 2**). Therefore, no licence was issued since then, for anybody to build a dam in any catchment in Namibia. The dams in the area of Midgard referred to are known and an investigation report carried out by DWAF in 1997 has looked into such dams and their impact on the inflow of the dam was concluded to be negligible (2.75% of the capacity of Von Bach dam, **Annexure3**). This does not rule out a possibility of illegal dams being built. MAWF and Namwater are jointly investigating the issue and any farmer to be found with an illegal dam **will be dealt with in accordance with the laws** of the Republic of Namibia.
- 2.4. It is a fact that the plans are being implemented. The nation is hereby informed that it is also a fact that Windhoek was going to run dry by December 2016. Such a catastrophic situation was averted by plans and timeous implementation thereof, as put in place by the Technical Committee of Experts (TCE) with the guidance of the Cabinet Committee on Water Supply Security approached by H. E. The President of the Republic of Namibia. The negligence alleged by the Editor is therefore not factual and cannot be substantiated.
- 2.5. The use of the word “perhaps” while making serious allegations to a person or people, especially in an editorial, is tantamount to personal attacks or infringing onto other people’s rights. The politicians who connived or are friends with farmers should be identified. Politicians are at local and regional, as well as at legislative and executive levels and all have names and positions. Why not coming out with facts? The Editor of the Namibian Sun is hereby, once again, kindly requested to provide the names of the farmers and politicians.
3. This is a preliminary reaction to this matter; the MAWF and Namwater are jointly carrying out thorough investigations, which will be followed by a Press Conference, to ensure that the air is cleared with facts, once and for all.

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Percy W. Misika
PERMANENT SECRETARY