



VOTE 18

2023/2024 FINANCIAL YEAR

BUDGET STATEMENT

BY

**HON. POHAMBBA SHIFETA, MP
MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND TOURISM**

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

March 2023

Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House Committee,
Hon Members

I am honoured to rise today to present the budget vote 18 of the Ministry of Environment, Forestry, and Tourism for the 2023 / 24 financial year to this august house for approval.

Honourable Members,

I am pleased to inform you that the Ministry of Environment, Forestry, and Tourism has been allocated an amount of Five hundred and seventy million, seven hundred and five thousand Namibian dollars (**N\$570,705,000**) for the 2023/24 financial year.

This amount represents:

- Four hundred and ninety million, seven hundred and five thousand Namibian dollars (**N\$490,705,000**) for the Operational Budget; and
- Eighty million Namibian dollars (**N\$80,000,000**) for the Development Budget.

It is notable that this is an increase of 11% in Operational Budget and 50% increase in Development Budget compared to the budget allocation in 2022/23 and this results in an overall budget increase of 16% for 2023/2024.

Although I must state that the budget is still not sufficient for the Ministry to execute all of its operational programs as expected, we shall strive to execute our mandate to our level best. The Ministry remains fully cognizant of the fiscal constraints within which we are operating and shall endeavour to operate in a most efficient manner for maximum impact.

Honourable Members,

Allow me to now briefly highlight some of the key achievements, challenges, and priorities in terms of the six programs of the Ministry.

The first program of the Ministry is **Wildlife and Protected Area Management**, which is allocated an amount of two hundred and twelve million, five hundred and ninety-two thousand, three hundred and twenty-six Namibian dollars (**N\$212,592,326**).

Our protected areas continue to play an important role in conserving our wildlife, serve as important habitats and landscapes, and are one of the key tourists draw

cards in Namibia. Some of the Ministry's achievements in protected area management in 2022/2023 included:

The **upgrading and re-gravelling of the road network** in Etosha National Park especially 195kms of the worst sections in the western part of the Park. Road maintenance works were undertaken on 74kms of the roads in the central and eastern sections of the Park. The **upgrading and construction of the Etosha National Park boundary fence** by our own staff members commenced and 35kms of the fence has been completed. Several waterpoints in the Etosha National Park and other parks were upgraded to provide water for game.

In terms of essential infrastructure, **staff houses, offices and tourism receptions** were constructed in the Skeleton Coast, Dorob National Parks and the Cape Cross Seal Reserve with co-funding from the German Government through KfW.

With regard to **wildlife management**, rhino poaching remains a serious concern with eighty-seven (87) rhinos poached in 2022 compared to forty five (45) in 2021. Cases of elephant poaching declined with four (4) elephants poached in 2022 compared to ten (10) in 2021. More arrests were also made in 2022. Wildlife protection and law enforcement is a priority programme for the 2023 / 2024 financial year and the focus will be on ensuring human capacity and manpower to fight wildlife crime; provision of suitable and sufficient equipment, techniques and supplies; providing surveillance, patrolling and detection; conducting planning, intelligence and investigation.

In 2022, **Namibia's communal conservancies** contributed N\$30 million to the national economy. The sector continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and is being boosted by the increasing tourist arrivals to Namibia. The Ministry continued to implement the Conservation Relief, Recovery and Resilient Facility (COVID-19 Facility), which has been providing financial relief to CBNRM institutions affected by the COVID-19 pandemic since 2020. In 2022, the facility provided N\$56 million in direct support to both communal conservancies and community forests to manage their operations and natural resources in order to improve community livelihoods and poverty reduction. Communal conservancies now employ over five thousand and three hundred and fifty people (5,350). This is a classic example of rural employment creation using our own natural resources.

Community Based Natural Resource Management remains a key priority spending programme for 2023 / 2024. Our main target and outputs for this programme includes increasing resilience of the sector from the Covid 19 pandemic, growing income generated for communities from wildlife, creating more jobs for rural communities, and providing game meat for household consumption.

The Ministry will continue to prioritize **human wildlife conflict management** in line with the Revised National Policy on Human Wildlife Conflict Management. Measures and strategies to manage human wildlife conflict will be implemented in ways that recognize the rights and development needs of local communities, the need to promote biodiversity conservation, promote self-reliance and ensure that decision-making is quick, efficient and based on the best available information.

Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House
Honorable Members,

The second program of the Ministry is the **Protection and Management of Key Species and Natural Habitats**, which is allocated a total of twenty-nine million, eight hundred and thirty-nine thousand, four hundred and twenty-nine Namibian dollars (**N\$29,839,429**). This program mainly refers to monitoring and research to guide the sustainable conservation and management of species of high conservation value.

A number of **wildlife monitoring** activities were undertaken to support the Government's sustainable utilization policy as well as to assess the status of wildlife populations. Fixed route game counts were conducted in the conservancies of the northwest, north central and the south as well as in Hardap and Naute game reserves. Aerial surveys were conducted in national parks such as Waterberg Plateau Park, Mangetti National Park. A survey of elephants occurring in the Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area in the north-eastern parts of Namibia was successfully conducted and results are expected before June 2023. A survey of elephants occurring in Etosha National Park, and north-western Namibia is planned for the new financial year while a dedicated survey of the black rhino will also be conducted in Etosha National Park.

In terms of **species conservation planning**, a species conservation strategy and action plan has been developed and approved for African wild dog. This is the most threatened large carnivore species in Namibia. A dedicated programme of action will be undertaken in the areas around Okakarara and Omaheke where

most conflicts with wild dogs is experienced while other conservation measures will also be implemented in the areas where the wild dogs are found.

The **regulations on keeping of large carnivores in captivity** were gazetted and repeal the regulations published in 2012. The regulations introduce new measures aimed at improving the welfare of the large carnivores being kept in captivity. The new regulations will be workshopped with key stakeholders before full implementation starts, and this is scheduled to take place in the 2023/2024 financial year.

Honourable Members,

The third program of the Ministry is **Tourism Growth Development and Gaming Regulations**, which is allocated twenty-three million, five hundred eighty-eight thousand and sixty-one Namibian dollars (**N\$23,588,061**). This program focuses on putting in place a favorable enabling and regulatory environment for the sustained growth of the tourism and gaming industry so that it contributes to the socio-economic development of the country.

The following main activities were executed during the 2022/2023 financial year:

The Ministry developed a National Tourism Sector Recovery Plan 2022-2024 to guide the revival, reboot, and rebuilding of the tourism sector, for more successful and sustainable targeted interventions.

As part of efforts to empower the youth in the sector, the Ministry hosted the 4th Africa Youth in Tourism Innovation Challenge and Summit under the theme "Developing youth and innovative entrepreneurship solutions for inclusive tourism recovery in Africa". The Youth Summit provided a unique platform for connecting young entrepreneurs to potential partnerships, market access (business-to-business engagements), exhibition, career guidance and mentorship as well as to funding opportunities.

One of the key outcomes of the Summit was the establishment of the Africa Tourism Innovation Hub (ATIH) in Namibia, in partnership with Africa Tourism Partners, Durban University of Technology, Namibia University of Science, Technology and Mobile Telecommunications Company (MTC) and other partners that will join in the future the noble cause for the tourism entrepreneurship development for the youth of Africa, in particular, Namibia. The Ministry has also targeted training for tour guides. This training program aims to beef up

professionalism and at developing a national framework for the registration and accreditation of tourist guides. Within such training program, the Ministry is adopting an entrepreneurial capacity development for the youth in tourism, through which the Ministry will increase the level of its contribution towards economic empowerment of the youth in the sector.

The Ministry was able to establish, support, and operationalise the following six (6) Regional Tourism Forums; namely, Oshikoto, Otjozondjupa, Erongo, Zambezi, Hardap, and !Kharas Tourism Regional Forum. The Forums are serving as a platform to enhance cooperation amongst relevant regional stakeholders and facilitate networks and coordinate tourism growth initiatives such as cultural tourism products and services, generic tourism information, safety and security of tourists and the development of tourism businesses in the regions.

The Ministry and partners continued to implement the National Strategy on Sustainable Heritage Tourism Development and Employment Creation Opportunities at Community Level 2020 - 2030. As part of the implementation process, an awareness and educational campaign was undertaken in Oshikoto, !Kharas, Kunene, Omaheke, Oshana and Kavango East regions to explore the untapped potential when it comes to cultural and heritage tourism in these regions.

The Ministry has improved the publication and timeliness of tourism statistics. The Annual Tourist Statistical Report of 2021 was published in June 2022 and showed that foreign arrivals increased significantly by 29.1% in 2021 compared to 2020. Tourist Arrival numbers, on the other hand, grew by 37.3%, from 169,565 in 2020 to 232,756 in 2021. Indicative figures show that there was an increase of 4.6% in tourist arrivals to Namibia, to a total of 243,466 in 2022. This growth is encouraging considering the negative impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sector globally since its onset. However, these visitor numbers remain very low for the country at present to sustain significant employment in the sector. But, we are seeing good signs of recovery of the sector.

The Ministry in conjunction with the Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) launched the 6th edition of the Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSA) project in May 2022. TSA is a standard statistical framework and tool for the economic measurement of tourism which allows for the harmonization and reconciliation of tourism statistics from an economic perspective and enables the generation of tourism economic data that is comparable with other economic statistics.

The Ministry and other key stakeholders, developed Kavango–Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA) UNIVISA Implementation Plan in 2022.

As part of the implementation of the Gaming and Entertainment Control and Lotteries Act, two public entities, namely, the Lotteries Board and the Gambling Board of Namibia were gazetted. Both Boards commenced with their oversight function, conducted awareness, education and public meetings with stakeholders and undertook industry benchmarking visits to South Africa and Botswana in 2022.

The main tourism priorities for 2023/24 are:

- **Implementation of the National Tourism Recovery Plan** to coordinate the resuscitation of the sector, create employment opportunities and support livelihoods through tourism;
- Development of the **National Tourism Bill** to strategically re-position and transform the tourism sector for it to become a preferred resource for fighting against poverty and creation of wealth through tourism-based enterprise development;
- Development of the **National Tourism Spatial Development Master Plan** to provide a framework that will guide the spatial development and improvement of tourism products in Namibia, thereby making Namibia a more competitive tourist destination;
- **Hosting of Etosha Carnival** – this is a new product developed with an aim to promote heritage and culture as well as sustainable tourism development.
- Convening A National Tourism Conference & Expo (Tourism Indaba). The hosting of a **National Tourism Conference and Expo**, which is necessitated by the need for Namibia to create a market access for its vast array of its tourism products;
- Establishment of **Tourism Information Mobile Application**, which will serve as an online platform for tourism profiling and marketing in partnership with private initiatives for sharing of good and best practices on tourism planning, development, management and marketing;
- Implementation of **KAZA UNIVISA programme** in collaboration KAZA neighboring countries to review and align border processes, forms and administrative requirements;
- Strengthening and operationalization of **the Gambling Board of Namibia**. Funds are required for the development of Strategic and Integrated

Business Plan, implementation of the online application systems, and Central Monitoring system and overall establishment of the Public Enterprise as required by the new Gaming and Entertainment Control Act in order to stabilise it as a meaningful regulatory public entity in the entertainment industry to contribute to national economic development; and

- Strengthening and operationalization of **the Lotteries Board of Namibia**. Funds are required for the development of Strategic and Integrated Business Plan, implementation of the recruitment of Operator/Licensee to conduct State Lotto, appointment of Inspectors and management structure and the overall establishment of the Public Enterprise as required by the new Lotteries Act in order to stabilise the enterprise as a meaningful regulatory public entity in the lotteries industry to contribute to national economic development.

**Honorable Chairperson of the Whole House,
Honorable Members,**

The fourth program of the Ministry is **Environment and Natural Resources Protection**, which is allocated a total amount of one hundred thirty-three million one hundred seventy-eight thousand eight hundred thirty-one Namibian dollars (**N\$133,178,831**). This is the second biggest programme of the Ministry and involves the implementation of the Environmental Management Act, 2007 (Act No.7 of 2007), forestry management, environmental awareness and economics, and the implementation of various multilateral environmental agreements that Namibia is party to.

In terms of the Environmental Management Act, over 1,400 applications for Environmental Clearance Certificates (ECCs) were received during the time under review, with the majority (457) related to mining and infrastructure development (292), of which 25% of the applications are still pending, while 75% of them were issued with ECC. The application procedure continues to be enhanced by the use of the online application system.

About 50 sites were inspected and monitored for compliance with the Environmental Management Act. Non-compliance with the Environmental Management Act - by those with ECCs and proponents undertaking listed activities without ECCs – remains a challenge. To offset this, we are now currently

busy activating Section 18 of the EMA to appoint Environmental Officers in the Regions from the Directorates of both Parks and Forestry.

The Ministry continued to spearhead efforts to access environmental finance from various multilateral funding windows. For the past five years, we have accessed above N\$ 2 billion in environmental funding to fight climate change, land degradation and halt biodiversity loss. Namibia is recognized as an international leader on climate change and hosted a successful Conference on Climate Change and Development in Windhoek in October 2022 which resulted in the African declaration presented at COP27 in Egypt.

Environmental awareness raising, focusing on the youth and learners, continued with the commemoration of environmental days such as International Day on Biodiversity at Oshifo in Ruacana Community Hall, the World Day to Combat Desertification on the 17th June 2022 in Opuwo, National Arbor Day in October through the planting of trees in schools and communities across all 14 regions, and the National Clean-Up Campaign Day on 17th September 2022 in Grootfontein.

Honourable Members,

In terms of the policy framework and initiatives for the sustainable management of forestry resources, the Forest Act (Act 12 of 2001) and its related regulations were reviewed and the draft amendment bill will soon be tabled to the Cabinet Committee on Legislation. The National Strategy on the Sustainable Management of Bush Resources was developed and officially launched during the period under review. Two state forest reserves, namely: Kanovlei in the Otjozondjupa and Hamweyi in the Kavango West region have been gazetted in December 2022. These are the first forested areas that have been put under the management of the State. Three Community Forests were also gazetted namely Ambrosius Haingura in Kavango West, Aminius in Omaheke, and Ozonahi in Otjozondjupa region.

Law enforcement and crime prevention related to forest resources were carried out across the country. This included 835 forest resources inspections, 421 patrols and 161 roadblocks conducted, 41 admission of guilt fines issued, and 9 cases opened against offenders. Various capacity building and training initiatives were undertaken whereby 28 officials were trained in law enforcement and 10 officials received training on the identification of common timber species and prevention of cross-border trafficking.

In terms of tree planting and the use of orchards and plantations for socio-economic development, 158,906 tree seedlings were produced at government nurseries with 14,096 of these seedlings being donated to communities, and schools free of charge.

In terms of veld fire management, several proactive measures were undertaken leading to a reduction in the area burned of almost 1.5 million hectares in 2022 compared to 3.2 million hectares in 2021. These measures included:

- 328 kilometers of fire breaks were constructed;
- 15 fire-fighting units established, trained and equipped;
- Stricter guidelines for charcoal production were developed and enforced to reduce veld fire incidents; and
- Improved maintenance and deployment of firefighting equipment.

The focus for 2023/24 will be on building further on the achievements made and overcoming challenges experienced, including:

- upgrading of nurseries infrastructure, and orchard management.
- improve on the enforcement of the Forest Act as regard to procedural charcoal burning;
- Illegal occupation of land in gazetted forest areas;
- Illegal timber harvesting and poaching of protected plant species; and
- Enhancement of our veld fire preparedness and management.

**Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House,
Honorable Members,**

The fifth programme of the Ministry is Infrastructure and Development, Maintenance, Monitoring, and Evaluation, which is allocated an amount of seventy-five million, one hundred and seven thousand, five hundred and ninety-seven Namibian dollars (**N\$75,107,597**), mainly for repair and upgrade of protected areas' fences, construction, and renovation of staff houses and offices.

Five main sub-programmes were implemented under this programme in 2022/23 to ensure the provision of infrastructure to enhance biodiversity conservation and tourism development in Namibia. These were:

(i) **Public Works and Public Property/Asset Management Programme**, which had a budget of N\$11.05 million and for which actual expenditure was

N\$7,338,341.53. The main achievements here were the renovation of staff houses at Waterberg (15), Von Bach (3), and office at Omaruru, commencement of the renovation of the Ministry's Headquarters and development of the Ministry's Integrated Online Permit System.

(ii) **Development of Tourism Programme**, which had a budget of N\$6.2 million and for which actual expenditure was N\$5,930,244.59. The main achievement here was the rehabilitation of roads in Etosha National Park as mentioned earlier as well as the repair and maintenance of the Ministry's heavy Equipment.

(iii) **Wildlife Management Programme**, which had a budget of N\$13.55 million and for which actual expenditure was N\$9,857,751.24. The main achievements here were the construction, repair and electrification of the elephant and predator proof fence in Etosha National Park, drilling of two boreholes at Galton Gate, Etosha National Park and the rehabilitation of Game Capture equipment.

(iv) **Waste, Pollution and Urban Environment**, which had a budget of N\$2 million and for which actual expenditure was N\$316,178.07. The upgrading of sewerage facilities at Sesriem and Sossus-Dune Lodge was the main activity implemented under this programme.

(v) **Integrated Forest Management**, which had a budget of N\$6.7 million and for which actual expenditure was N\$4,013,079. The main achievements here were the purchasing of fire-fighting equipment, renovation of offices for Directorate of Forestry and rehabilitation of a borehole at Mukwe.

The following main projects are prioritized for execution in 2023/24 through the capital budget:

1. Construction and Renovation of MEFT Head Office (N\$9.97 million)
2. Construction and Extension of Staff Houses and Offices (N\$16.98 million)
3. Upgrading of Tourist Roads (N\$12.25 million)
4. Upgrading of Sewer and water supply systems in Protected Areas (N\$1 million)
5. Water Provision for Game (N\$350,000)
6. Wildlife Translocation (Budget: N\$7.1 million)
7. Integrated Forest Management (N\$15.65 million)
8. Fencing of Conservation Areas (N\$6.4 million).

Honorable Members,

The sixth and final program of the Ministry is **Policy, Supervision, and Support Services**, which is allocated an amount of ninety-six million three hundred ninety-eight thousand seven hundred fifty-eight Namibian dollars (**N\$96,398,758**). With the limited available resources at disposal this program oversees successful implementation and execution of the mandate of the Vote through creating enabling environment for the above stated programs. Thus, this program enhances organizational performance and improved public service delivery.

**Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House Committee,
Honourable Members,**

Before I conclude, allow me to thank the Deputy Minister, the Executive Director, the management, and the entire staff of the Ministry of Environment, Forestry, and Tourism for their commitment and hard work.

Finally, once again, I thank the Honourable Minister of Finance and Public Enterprises, the Director-General of the National Planning Commission for allocating four hundred and ninety million, seven hundred five thousand Namibian dollars (**N\$490,705,000**) for the Operational Budget and equally thankful for the eighty million Namibian dollars (**N\$80,000,000**) for the Development Budget.

I now kindly, ask this Honourable House to approve an amount of five hundred and seventy million, seven hundred and five thousand Namibian dollars (**N\$570,705,000**) for the 2023/24 financial year.