



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND TOURISM

**RESPONSE BY HON. POHAMBA SHIFETA (MP), MINISTER
OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND TOURISM TO
QUESTIONS RAISED BY HON. UTARAA MOOTU ON THE
ISSUE OF TOURISM CONCESSIONS IN PROTECTED
AREAS**

Wednesday, 29 APRIL 2024

Honourable Speaker

I hereby wish to respond to the questions directed to the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism on the issue of tourism concessions in Protected Areas by the Honourable Utaara Mootu, the member of the LPM party. I wish to thank the Honourable member for raising these pertinent questions. It is my wish that the responses provided to these questions will also be informative and educative to the Honourable Member as well as the general public who may not be familiar with these issues. Before I respond to the questions at hand, I wish to inform you that one of the main responsibilities of the Ministry is to promote tourism, specifically Namibia as a tourism destination. Therefore, we will not implement any undertaking which will jeopardize that. The Ministry acts within the framework of Laws (Nature Conservation Amendment Act, 2017, Act No. 3 of 2017) and National Policy of Tourism and Wildlife Concessions on Stateland, 2007. No awarded concession has disadvantaged any SME enterprises, in fact SMEs owned by Previously Disadvantaged Namibians have added advantage in the concession awarding processes. Just like other Government entities, the Ministry has been working on transforming the tourism industry to reflect the composition of our population.

The Ministry will never award concessions which will have detrimental effects on the Namibian tour operators. Our aim is to improve service delivery and make Namibia one of the best and affordable tourism destination. No Namibian will be excluded from entering Sandwich

Harbour. Awarding Sandwich Harbour as a Concession will not in any way affect access to the area. All current tour Operators will continue to access the area as usual as long as they pay all their relevant costs. No single operator will be allowed to set the permit fees as alleged, that is the responsibility of the Ministry.

Honourable Speaker

The Ministry will ensure that fees to be charged to visitors will still be lower compared to our neighbouring countries and across Africa. The Etosha and Namib Naukluft National Parks are the top two tourist destinations in Namibia. The current Park entrance fee stands at N\$100 per day for SADC tourists and N\$150 per day for international tourists. We provide the following information relating to the daily Park entrance fees charged regionally, and these are for sites comparable to Etosha and Namib Naukluft Parks:

- a. Zimbabwe, fees are N\$500 for SADC tourists and N\$1000 for international tourists.
- b. Zambia-entrance fees are N\$400 for SADC tourists and N\$500 for international tourists
- c. Botswana-entrance fees are N\$283 for SADC tourists and N\$373 for international tourists
- d. South Africa-entrance fees are N\$257 for SADC tourists and N\$535 for international tourists
- e. Kenya- high tourism season entrance fees are USD100 and USD80 for low season
- f. Tanzania- high tourism season entrance fees are USD70 and USD35 for low season

Based on these prices, it is clear that concerns that Namibia will become an expensive tourist destination are unfounded and the country will remain the cheapest tourist destinations in Africa

Honourable Speaker

I now reply to the specific questions raised by Hon. Mootu.

Question 1:

Concessions are made to primarily benefit the grassroots economy, however when it is accorded through tender bids, it benefits an individual. What is more impactful? Is it when concession is given as a tender or to the communities?

Answer:

The Ministry award concessions directly to communities living within or adjacent to the Protected Areas without going through the tender process. In all our Protected Areas, with concessions, namely Etosha, Namib Naukluft, Skeleton Coast, Dorob and Bwabwata National Parks, there are concession awarded directly to communities. However, communities awarded concessions directly still get assisted by the Ministry to appoint investors through a tender process. So, all concessions go through the tender process to be operational, namely to either procure an investor for a certain community or to appoint an operator. The impact is comparable because all concessions create jobs for the local communities and there are also other social responsibilities which come with being a concession holder. In all the recent concessions awarded, communities get 75% of the concession fees and the Government only get 25%, so irrespective whether the concession is

awarded to a local community or to a private company the benefits are similar.

Question 2:

Five German Nationals accorded exclusive rights to operate on the Dune Belt and no other tour operators are allowed to operate there, how is that possible for five individuals to get exclusive rights to operate on the Dune Belt and the exclude other tour operators on these bases?

Answer:

No such concession contracts are in existence. However, those rights do exist in the Management Plan for Dorob National Park and will be advertised and awarded through an open and transparent process, with local communities to benefit through an allocation of 75% of concession fees.

Question 3:

Is it the Government's intention to give all concessions as tender bids?

Answer:

The Minister is only empowered by the Law to directly award concessions to local communities without following the tender process. Even if a concession is awarded directly to the local community, an investor will still be needed as local communities do not have resources

to implement concessions. The investors will still be appointed through the tender process.

Namibian laws are very clear, any other concessions should be awarded through. So, all concession will be awarded through an open and transparent manner. All Namibians must have equal opportunities.

Question 4:

What are the measures that the Government has put in place to make sure that the grassroots economy benefits from these tender concessions given that the tender application for Sandwich Harbour stipulates that exclusive rights will be given to the entrepreneur?

Answer:

No Namibian will be excluded from entering Sandwich Harbour, hence no exclusive rights will be given to any company to conduct tours in Sandwich Harbour. All current and future Namibian registered Tour Operators will access the area as usual as long as they pay all their relevant fees. No single operator will be allowed to set the permit fees as alleged, that is the responsibility of the Ministry. The Ministry will ensure that fees to be charged to visitors will still be affordable in comparison to comparable places in our neighbouring countries and across Africa.

I thank you Honourable Speaker for the opportunity to response to the questions posed by the Honourable Member.

I thank you all for listening.