



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
MINISTRY OF FISHERIES & MARINE RESOURCES

ANNUAL FISHING INDUSTRY ADDRESS

BY

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MINISTER OF FISHERIES AND MARINE RESOURCE

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WALVIS BAY

Director of Ceremonies Madam Annely Haiiphene, Executive
Director of the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources
Honourable Neville Andre litope, Governor of the Erongo
Region, the Region of Excellence
Regional and Local Authorities Councilloors present
Mr. Matti Amukua, Chairperson of Namibian Confederation
of Fishing Association
Representatives from Labour Unions
Staff members of the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine
Resources
Distinguished Invited Guests
Members of the Media
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning!

It is with honor, a feeling of being privileged and a sense of
commitment to the responsibility bestowed on me as the
Minister responsible for providing leadership on the running of
the Namibian fishery sector that i stand before you this
morning

Ladies and Gentlemen; today, I will be frank with you. And I hope that the status of where we are as a Ministry and as an industry would be clear to everyone within our brave nation and further that the prospects of the fishing industry would be appreciated even more after this address

As you are all aware, the events that took place prior to 2020 involving some fishing companies and the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources brought Government, the Ministry and a number of fisheries companies in a position of disgrace, scrutiny and criticism.

The exact details of these incidences are well known and are within the public space and discourse

More importantly, these incidences are now as you all might respectfully recall before our courts of law for adjudication.

That being the case, we all know that this industry is bigger than those incidences and further that these incidences do not define who we are or where we want to see this industry go or how far it can go.

This is because Namibia as a country with a democratic formation, has strong and separated branches of government allowing the proper functioning of for instance the judiciary without influence from the executive or legislative branches of government

As such, we must maintain our trust in our judiciary and allow it to determine the guilt or lack thereof of those brought to trial

Accordingly, while we accept that the responsible branch of government is dealing with establishing the blameworthiness or blamelessness of those on trial, our jobs remain the management and sustainable exploitation of fisheries for the benefit of all Namibians and not the spreading, peddling or creating negative narratives around our fishing industry

Ralph Kayes in his book titled, **Post Truth Era** says and I quote: In the post truth era we don't just have truth and lies but a third category of ambiguous statements that are not exactly the truth but fall just short of a lie. End of quote. In fact, this author calls it enhanced truth

So, in this era of press freedom and access to different platforms of information; all of us have a responsibility on how we disseminate this information to the next citizen. It is settled that Information is a very powerful tool with potential to “make” or “collapse” systems, institutions and even a whole sector such as the fishing sector.

Therefore, in these trying and post-truth era times, I believe that all responsible citizens have a moral duty to our nation to showcase that the Namibian Fishing Sector has always continue to exist and thrive amidst all calamities, natural or men-made

An example of our progressive efforts is to be found in the fact that the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources continues to regulate one of the most successful sectors of our economy. This sector continues to contribute to employment creation of Namibian citizens, contribute to national economic growth and continue to contribute in the form of taxes contribution to the state and other forms of resource rent.

In addition, since 2020, the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources no longer allocates fishing quotas to other entities through FISHCOR. All fishing rights that expired prior to the Ministry having taken a decision to extend or renewing that necessitated the arrangement to allocating fishing rights through FISHCOR have now been granted and as such, FISHCOR only receive the quota that is rightfully allocated to the company. The FISHCOR quota, is now allocated through the Minister of Public Enterprise and the Board Chairperson for reasons of accountability.

Let me touch on the subject of Governmental Objectives quotas that has become the talk of town, since early this week.

Governmental Objectives quotas are one of the forms of fishing quotas recognized in terms of Section 3 of the Marine Resources Amendment Act of 2015. In terms of the law, Government and the Ministry may from time to time use these category of fishing quotas, if quantities from the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) allow, to address Government or Ministry projects or programmes after receiving direction from Cabinet.

Such programmes could include temporary relief during droughts, floods, etc. Once again, allocation of Governmental Objectives quota has been streamlined to ensure that proceeds go directly to the intended beneficiary.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I can assure you that my Ministry has and, is going through a tough time in terms of public perception. However, my team of ministry officials, the industry and common law associations within the fishing sector, labour unions and I, remains committed to upholding those policies and legal directives that made the Namibian Fishing sector one of the most Namibian owned economic powerhouses in the country and, at the same time, streamline those policies and legal provisions that appears to be vulnerable for abuse

Additionally, despite minor challenges, the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources continue rendering policy and regulatory operating direction to the industry amidst the Covid-19 pandemic and the social and political perception created in the wake of the so-called Fishrot Scandal.

As if to add oil to fire, rumors or perceptions held by some citizens on the status of the health of our marine resources and how the resource is believed to be impacted by the prevalence of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing activities in Namibian waters present particular policy challenges.

But I can assure you that all systems, response times and other operational parameters have been reviewed or are undergoing review with the view to creating a robust response, create a monitoring presence, ensuring early detection and prosecution of all vessel found to be fishing illegally in Namibia's waters.

This review may consider but will not be limited to the use of modern technologies only but will involve the redesigning and strategic deployment of our current assets to ensure a tactical and functional advantage to Namibia in her fight against IUU activities within her waters

Ladies and gentlemen, I am proud to recognize the immense contribution by the Namibian living marine resources by partaking in Governmental efforts in controlling the spread of Covid-19 infections and its support to government's immunization programmes in the country. By the same token, the contribution of the fishing sector to national efforts of curbing and eliminating Covid-19 in Namibia cannot be underscored. The country remains grateful to your generous contributions and support during these exceptionally difficult times of global pandemic proportions. The efforts and measures that the industry took and continue to observe to ensure that the fishing industry continues to operate within National and international Covid-19 regulations is commendable. I must say, the fishing industry did very well.

In addition to challenges presented by Covid-19, there are a few policies and regulatory issues that I would share with you this morning.

It must be understood that Government Policies on the fishing sector are meant to achieve predefined developmental goals.

Such goals can be of a resource protection nature or, could address socio-economic issues. Let me demonstrate as an example: During the 2019/2020 and the 2020/2021 fishing seasons; results from most of our scientific stock assessment surveys indicated our commercial fish stocks, particularly hake, horse mackerel and crab are harvested within maximum sustainable yields. Additionally, survey results indicate that the growth of these stocks would continue to be slow at the present rate of fishing but would not be depleted. However, Monk stocks has proven to be challenging to grow but this stock is also manageable.

I must admit that the stock assessments for rock lobster and pilchard offer particular reason for concern. These stocks continue to present poor findings indicative of poor stock growth. The rock lobster stock is so poor that the average size of the quota is only 4 metric tons per right holder. This is indeed a small quota allocation considering the cost of harvesting processing, sales and distribution. It makes sense to me that rock lobster right holders are forever sharing their concern with me as to how it is expected of them to continue existing in this sub sector, in the face of such poor quota allocations.

Moreover, our policies of the past promoted the purchasing of rock lobster fishing boats which are currently experiencing operational maintenance difficulties, as well as sustaining employment created on these vessels. In addition to these challenges in the rock lobster subsector, I want to share with you that I am informed that the cost of doing business in Luderitz is much higher than anywhere else in the country. Therefore, I have directed the Executive Director of the ministry to explore measures available to the ministry within existing policies and legal framework on how we can ease the burden of rock lobster fishers and right holders.

As for the pilchard fishery, I am aware that the ministry, in consultation with the Marine Resources Advisory Council (MRAC), in the coming weeks will pronounce their advice for my consideration. However, I recognize that pilchard was a significant contributor to employment sustainability particularly in Walvis Bay and I admit that the impact it had on the livelihoods of the local residents and the national economy at large was very huge.

It therefore goes without saying that many people, especially those who once were part of this lucrative sub-sector of harvesting pilchard are waiting with bated breath the pronouncement of the Ministry regarding the pilchards' stock levels

I would therefore like to advise the role players to remain vigilant in these testing times with the hope that there is future for the return of this subsector. I put my trust in my officials and the management consultation process in place to ensure that we manage this resource with the recognition that our instruments present.

My Dear Fellow Fisheries Stakeholders, let me tell you that managing fisheries resources is not only challenging when stocks are not showing signs of strong recovery. Sometimes, even stocks that are healthy offer challenges. During many of my consultations with stakeholders in the fishing sector, I have not come across a person or company that is not complaining of what they refer to as the negative impact of the Seals population on other Namibian fish stocks. In this case, the Seals population has grown so well and it has become a problem.

To this end the Ministry's scientific assessments indicates that the Seals stock is doing very well and indeed the number of Seals are estimated at or above 1.4 million animals. Furthermore, industry stakeholders informed me that this number of seals consume on average more fish than what the whole country is fishing per year. With this in mind, you would be asking me why the Minister can just not increase the quota of seals. My answer to that would be yes; in law I can increase the quota to be harvested in any fishing season. However, harvesting processing and sales of Seals is more challenge than what meets the eye. It appears that only bulls are the preferred product to be harvested while the quota has more pups than bulls. Moreover, I am informed that the pups are not as economically feasible as the bulls. In addition, Seal harvesting has become an international tool used, particularly by environmentalist groups, to restrict the trade of fish and fisheries products originating from countries that harvest Seals.

Ladies and gentlemen, that is the dilemma we face at the ministry of fisheries and marine resources. I am sure the issue of Seals would be a subject of many of our consultations in the near future. Obviously, the Ministry would not continue the Seals debate without the affected stakeholders.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me also share my thoughts on some important issues. With regards to the 200m isobath trawling and longline restrictions currently in place for the industry, I am convinced that this measure aims at protecting horse mackerel and hake juveniles as well as spawning grounds for a number of commercially exploitable species for the sustainability of these resources. This measure in conjunction with other complimentary measures are the greatest arsenal in the protection of Ecologically and Biologically significant areas such as corals and other bottom habitats that play a key role in inhabiting and shaping biological communities. Some of these bottom habitats are biodiversity hotspots with slow recovery and in this way are protected from damage through a no trawling and longlining measure.

The 200m isobath restriction is also relevant for the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Certification for the hake fishery and other international commitments for Marine Protected Areas. This is also within the ambient of the draft Blue Economy Policy which is geared to improve ocean governance and sustainable ocean activities.

Importantly, I have taken note of the horse mackerel subsectors' request for fishing within the 200m isobath and is considering several options to ensure the coexistence of the horse mackerel fleets; both wet and freezer trawlers. In the meantime, the current 200m isobath ban on trawling and longlining shall remain enforce.

Ladies and gentleman,

In conclusion, the expectations of the citizens of this great Republic from you since you were fortunate to secure a fishing right and have receive a fishing quota is that you continue to improve the standards of living of your fellow country-men and women through a variety of methods and not necessarily limited to corporate social responsibility only but also through the making of meaningful investments, the creation of enterprises outside or in support of the fishing industry and targeted procurement aimed at procuring services from Namibians as stated in the Affirmative Action Act, Act 29 of 1998.

Also, and this point can never be over-emphasized. As a right holder, harvesting your granted quota, you are expected to pay all your taxes, levies and fees.

The payments of these fees are statutory obligations placed on all right holders and failure to comply with the law could lead to many adverse realities, including but not limited to the suspension of your right by the Ministry

As a new Minister tasked with presiding over this natural national resource, I am urging you all to put your efforts together and support my efforts in my desire to improving this industry. Your support and buy-in will ensure that we all benefit from this great opportunity of being a right-holder and ensure that this resource continue to cater jobs and economic livelihoods for many generations to come

I thank you for your attention