



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY:

**HONOURABLE POHAMBA SHIFETA, MINISTER OF
ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM**

**AT THE OCCASION OF THE THIRD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
AWARDS**

21ST MAY 2021,

TIME: 18H00

SAFARI HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTER,

WINDHOEK

Directors of Ceremony

Hon. Ipumbu Shiimi, Minister of Finance,

Hon. Agnes Tjongarero, Minister of Sports, Youth and National Services,

Hon. Ester Nghipondoka, Minister of Education, Arts and Culture

Hon. Heather Sibungo, Deputy Minister of Environment, Forestry and Tourism

HE Ms. Alka Bhatia, UNDP Resident Representative and

Dr. Armstrong Alexis, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative

Mr. Benedict Libanda, Chief Executive Officer of the Environmental Investment Fund

Ms. Gloria Simubali, Chairperson of the Sustainable Development Advisory Council

Members of the Sustainable Development Advisory Council

Board Members of the Environmental Investment Fund of Namibia

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Senior Government Officials present

Representatives of the Private Sector and captains of industry

Award nominees and recipients

Members of the Organising Committee

Distinguished members of the media

Ladies and Gentlemen

A VERY GOOD EVENING TO YOU ALL,

It is with great pride and satisfaction that I stand here tonight to deliver the keynote address at the third edition of Namibia's Sustainable Development Awards. This is truly a noble and exciting initiative for which I sincerely commend both the Environmental Investment Fund of Namibia and the Sustainable Development Advisory Council as the lead organizers. I furthermore take this opportunity to thank the sponsors of this year's awards – Namibia Wildlife Resorts, Agricultural Bank of Namibia, First National Bank Namibia and BDO Namibia. We could not have hosted this Awards without your support and we are immensely thankful for your contribution and partnership on this initiative.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The subject of this address and the theme of this year's Awards is ***“Accelerating the green economy transformation as we recover from Covid-19”***. Of course, in Namibia as in almost all other countries, the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the economy have been devastating and unprecedented. I am sure that each and every one of us here tonight has their own stories and experiences as to how the pandemic has affected the operations of their businesses, their working lives and indeed their personal lives.

In the tourism sector alone, we saw international tourist arrivals to Namibia decline by 87% in 2020. This overnight collapse has translated into a massive loss of over 1 000 jobs, with the closure of many tourism-related businesses. At the broader level, Government has been affected by a sharp decline in foreign exchange and tax revenues, which has further

curbed public spending capacity and our ability to deploy the measures necessary to support livelihoods through this crisis.

Yet as the saying goes, necessity is the mother of invention and there is a need for us to navigate our way out of this crisis based on the hard lessons we are learning. The disruption to supply chains and difficulties in the cross border movement of goods and people brought by the Covid-19 pandemic has brought into focus our over-reliance on other countries for essential foodstuffs and other manufactured goods. This is an important departure point as we rethink the country's approach to economic growth and socio-economic development.

The transition to a greener economy, based on the most efficient and sustainable use of our natural resources, offers us the opportunity to move out of this crisis and towards a nation that is food, water and energy secure. This will have the knock-on benefits of enhancing climate change resilience, creating decent employment opportunities and reducing income inequality. It is for this reason that the accelerating the green economy transition is key to our development as a nation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is notable that the first edition of these awards was held back in 2015 under the theme "The importance of a green agenda for Namibia". I am pleased to note that the green agenda in Namibia has moved on significantly since then. The green and blue economies are identified in the recently launched second Harambee Prosperity Plan as complementary engines of growth and the High Level Panel on the Namibian Economy recommended a number of concrete actions for the greening of the economy moving forward.

Before coming to the specific awards this evening, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Environmental Investment Fund and our partners for the establishment of the Conservation Relief, Recovery and Resilience Facility in May 2020. The CRRRF facility has now been in place for a year. I hence would like to take this opportunity to request all of us to give a round of applause to the tireless hardworking men and women who ensure that this facility continues to thrive.

This facility has made an immense contribution in supporting communal conservancies and tourism enterprises in conservancy areas to withstand the Covid-19 pandemic.

Since establishment, in May 2020, the facility has attracted a little over N\$ 123 million from different donors and contributories, through various implementation partners. Of the N\$ 123 million under the facility, about N\$ 99 million has so far been committed to various initiatives until December 2021, approximately N\$ 40 million has already been disbursed to all 86 gazetted conservancies. In line with the facilities' guidelines the balance will be released quarterly upon receiving the necessary accountability reports from the intended beneficiaries.

I would equally wish to emphasize the importance of the New Green Economy Programme (2030), which is a new strategic activity to grow the economy based on the identification and implementation of climate change adaptation and mitigation projects in all regions of the country. This Programme is also being spearheaded through the Environmental Investment Fund, and is an essential component of our transition towards a greener economy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Coming back to this evening's awards, I would like to extend my gratitude and thanks to all the applicants for this year's awards. The transformation towards a greener economy requires action and commitment from each and every one of us – be it organs of state, non-governmental organisations, community based organisations, the private sector, funding agencies down to the men and women on the street.

This evening we take the time to reward and honour those individuals and institutions, which are so committed and bringing new innovations to the table to ensure the sustainability of this nation.

And Ladies and Gentlemen, through events such as this you come to realize that a lot is happening in Namibia. Individuals and organizations are out there making a difference and leading the change we want to see in such a wide range of areas such as renewable energy, climate resilient agriculture, waste management, water use efficiency, eco-tourism and biodiversity conservation and sustainable utilization to mention a few.

I take this opportunity to thank all of you for the valued contribution you are making in this regard. I further encourage all of us to continue integrating sustainable principles into our operations and daily lives and to support our local businesses and entrepreneurs. I hope that other institutions and individuals will be inspired by your actions and dedication and help us as we build back the Namibian economy to be better and greener than ever before.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In closing, allow me to congratulate in advance all the nominees and winners at this third edition of Namibia's Sustainable Development Awards.

I thank you for listening.