REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

NAMIBIA WATER AND THE UN 2023 WATER CONFERENCE PREPARATORY MEETING, NEW YORK

25 OCTOBER 2022

A. INTRODUCTION/SUMMARY

Water is fundamental to all social and economic activities, in Namibia as elsewhere. Guaranteeing access to this essential resource to all Namibians, to satisfy both their basic survival and health needs, and to support the whole range of productive activities that contribute to the country's development, from subsistence agriculture and livestock herding to sophisticated industrial and manufacturing industries, is highly challenging.

Effective water resources management in Namibia is fundamental to social well-being and economic progress. In social terms, there is still a vital need to ensure that the country's majority rural population have access to reliable water supplies and inhibited productive and sustainable use of the resource. It is also important to ensure water security, and to sustain supplies to urban centres while extending services in rural areas.

In economic terms Namibia is highly dependent on its natural resource base for its principal productive activities: mining, agriculture, pastoralism, fishing and wildlife-based tourism as well as urban supplies and manufacturing. Water is therefore the single most important across-the-board contributor to the country's development prospects; conversely, its vulnerability also due to climate change impacts and inadequate management constitute the country's single most important development constraint.

The urgency to develop infrastructure imposed by the rapid expansion in water use in Namibia is of great concern. Already there are signs of environmental degradation and that the country's renewable and nonrenewable water supplies are being depleted. In this regard, the sustainable development of the country and consequently the well-being of all Namibians, depend on the integrated management of the water resources across sector – land, water and environment.

The proposed themes for the UN 2023 Water Conference fit in well with Namibia's priorities. The challenges of climate change impacts and funding for water supply infrastructure, if not properly managed will slow down Namibia's road towards achieving the Sustainable

development goals by 2030. Similarly, access to safely managed sanitation requires bigger efforts and coordination among sectors and different partners. There is strong need for the global water community to engage and share efforts to accelerate efforts towards meeting water-related challenges, beyond the UN 2023 Water Conference. The proposal to appoint a UN Special Envoy on Water should be supported to place the water on all global high level agenda.

B. PROPOSED THEMES - NAMIBIA VIEWS

1. Water for Health: Access to safe drinking water, hygiene and sanitation

Namibia takes note of the fact that in meeting the SDG 6 on water and sanitation for all, we are lagging way behind when it comes to sanitation target, although access to water for rural communities is also behind. We are also revising our National Sanitation and Hygiene Strategy with a long term vision of "Improved health, dignity and quality of life for all Namibians through improvements in sanitation and hygiene". All in all, there is a need to improve access to sanitation and hygiene in informal urban settlement by providing dry/wet sanitation services; and to provide universal access to sanitation and hand washing facilities in public institutions.

The provision of safe water, sanitation and hygienic services is essential to protect human health during all infectious disease outbreaks, including the COVID–19 (Coronavirus Disease) outbreak. Ensuring good and consistently applying Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and waste management practices in communities, homes, schools, marketplaces, prisons and health care facilities can help prevent oral–faecal and human–to–human transmission of diseases. Current evidence indicates that the COVID- 19 virus is transmitted through respiratory droplets or contact. Contact transmission occurs when contaminated hands touch the mucosa of the mouth, nose, or eyes; the virus can also be transferred from one surface to another by contaminated hands, which facilitate indirect contact transmissions. Hence the hand washing facilities to ensure regular washing of contaminated hands has been put up at schools clinics and public places, using civil society organisation to help.

GRN's objective as per Water Supply and Sanitation Policy (2008) is to improve the provision of sanitation services in order so as to contribute towards improved health and quality of life; use of improved sanitation infrastructure options; ensure a hygienic environment; protect water sources from pollution; promote water conservation and stimulate economic development.

The main objectives are to ensure sustainable development, management and optimal utilization of water resources; and to strengthen regional and national water supply and sanitation services coordination.

National water demand in 2015 was estimated at about 334 million cubic meters per year and is projected to reach 583 and 772 million cubic meters per year by 2025 and 2030 respectively.

About 99% and 87% of urban and rural population have access to potable water, respectively. It is expected that by 2022, Namibia has a sustainable production and consumption of water resources resulting in improved access to safe drinking water for human consumption and industrial use. The NDP 5 targets 100% of the urban population and 95% of the rural population to have access to safe drinking water by 2022.

To meet the above-mentioned targets, there is a need to: 1) maintain, upgrade and rehabilitate the current water infrastructure, construct large dams, harvest water for the rural areas and drill and refurbish boreholes; 2) construct new bulk water infrastructure including a desalination plant to supply water to the central coast, construct the Kavango link for augmenting water supply to the Central Areas of Namibia, develop the Noordoewer dam on the Lower Orange and the Ohangwena Aquifer; 3) improve water resources management and utilisation by reducing losses, increasing water savings, addressing water quality and pollution control, upgrading and maintenance of the water resource data collection network and developing forecasting and early warning systems; and 4) enhance trans-boundary cooperation of shared watercourses to ensure equitable and reasonable allocation therefrom.

The total value of the water supply infrastructure development projects is estimated at N$ 10,820 billion. They are planned to be implemented over the next five to seven years and the funding thereof will be sought from both the Government (with the assistance of among others the African Development Bank and the German Government through the KfW) and NamWater.

2. ***Water for Development: Valuing Water, Water-Energy-Food Nexus and Sustainable Economic and Urban Development***

The integrated water resources management approach in Namibia allows for achievement of a sustainable water resources management regime that can effectively and efficiently contribute to social equity, economic growth and environmental sustainability.

A key challenge in sustainability of the water sector is customer tariffs. Water utilities have difficulty investing in infrastructure and maintaining it when they cannot rely on revenue streams that cover the costs of operation and investment. Namibia's water sector is not fully regulated for private sector investment, and we are currently preparing the ground for water financing by putting essential governance measures in place.

The Pricing Policy for services in the water sector is being developed, which will set out norms and standards for the fixing of tariffs and charges for these services, by the Water Regulator. This will ensure that the water sector becomes self-sufficient and feasible, not only repaying the investment and financial charges linked to it, but also ensuring that reserves are generated to maintain and replace the assets at some point in future.

Given Namibia's climate that is fraught with more frequent and severe droughts, there is a need to carry out the feasibility of establishing a Water Scarcity Fund which will preserve funds for emergencies related to drought and to explore the possibility of converting a portion of its tariff to a basic charge that will cater for water infrastructure replacement.

3. Water for Climate, Resilience and Environment: Source to Sea, Biodiversity, Climate, Resilience and Disaster Risk Reduction

Due to the aridity of the Namibian climate all rivers in the interior of the country are ephemeral, meaning that they only flow when rainfall is sufficient, normally only for short periods during the rainfall season. This limits the potential of the surface water sources and the recharge of groundwater.

As such, Namibia has developed and is developing unconventional measures to increase her water availability capacity. These include amongst other, managed aquifer recharge/water banking of surface water into groundwater aquifers to avoid evaporation and use during drought, practiced in the City of Windhoek in coordination with the Namibia Water Corporation; direct reclamation of wastewater to potable quality (in Windhoek); desalination of seawater at the coast (Erongo Desalination Plant, and a second one is planned) and brackish groundwater (four plants, two in the South of the Country and two in the North central, plus one deflouridation plant), and reuse and recycling of waste water in the mining industry for dust depression, cleaning in different factories and to water park and sport field in several municipalities. These activities require a large amount of investments and capacity, especially for operation and maintenance of the infrastructure.

Although internal rivers are ephemeral, protecting the ecosystem is crucial. The national policy provides that wastewater is treated to the recommended quality before it is disposed into the environment. With the construction of dams to catch flood waters for different uses, the downstream ecosystem is maintained by releasing water from the dams. Studies to determine the exact quantity from the Fish River Dams (Neckartal and Hardap Dams) are ongoing.

MAWLR and Namwater coordinate dam operations for flood release during the rainy seasons. Satellite information is also used to monitoring rainfall and runoff, and for early warning, additional to the river flow monitoring stations country wide. Being a downstream country, cooperation with upstream countries, ensures that flow levels information is shared, directly between countries and through River Basin Commission and RECS.

4. Water for Cooperation: Transboundary and International Water Cooperation,

Namibia's border rivers (Orange, Okavango, Kunene, Zambezi, Cuvelai) are International Watercourses with an obligation for them to be managed and used in terms of the relevant rules of International Law. The underlying principles thereof are to adopt a holistic approach, with respect to their use, protection and regulation.

The Revised SADC Water Protocol, Water Policy and Water Strategy are regionally accepted and up to date instruments to manage shared water resources. These instruments should be employed as a basis for negotiating agreements on the border rivers. There is an Agreement in place with the respective basin states for a water allocation from the Kunene River and on the Orange there is an understanding about Namibian access to a certain quantity of water. However, there are no such agreements for the Okavango and Zambezi rivers.

As with surface water, groundwater is found in transboundary aquifer. With climate change and frequent droughts, groundwater becomes the saviour of many cities and nations during drought events. Watercourse commissions like ORASECOM and CUVECOM have noticed the need to manage surface and groundwater in an integrated manner, thus embedded groundwater management issues in their IWRM Plans and established specific focus groups.

The following international legal instruments also provides for transboundary river basins management: the Helsinki Rules of 1966, The UN Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses (New York, 1997 – Namibia ratified) and the Revised SADC Protocol on shared watercourses (Namibia ratified). The Draft articles on the Law of Transboundary Aquifers, once adopted can provide further cooperation among states on transboundary aquifer governance.

With the opening up of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (1992), to allow other UN Member states outside of Europe to accede, Namibia sees this as a great opportunity to be part of this global framework. The Convention establishes principles and rules that form the basis for countries working together to protect and sustainably use their shared freshwater resources. Namibia being a downstream country in most of her transboundary shared rivers relies on good neighbourliness and joint cooperation which the Water Convention is centred around.

By acceding to the Water Convection, Namibia would gain new prospects for enhanced transboundary cooperation in Sub-Saharan Africa, conflict prevention and regional stability, currently enjoyed by European and other African countries. Namibia's accession process to the Water Convention is at advanced stage.

5. Water Action Decade: Accelerating the implementation of the objectives of the Decade including through the United Nations Secretary-General's Action Plan

All Namibia policies and strategies are aimed at ensure water and sanitation for all. The sustainable development and integrated management of water resources for the achievement of social, economic and environmental objectives are stipulated in the Integrated Water Resource Management of 2010, which is being reviewed and updated.

Since 2016, Namibia has raised the water profile including funding and investment opportunities for water supply and sanitation infrastructure. Namibia as such remains committed to the implementation and promotion of related programmes and projects, as well as on the furtherance of cooperation and partnership at all levels in order to help to achieve internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

At continental level, the International High-Level Panel on Water Investments for Africa will drive global political mobilization and international engagement to meet the socio-economic needs of the continent, SDG 6 water related targets, and address the twin challenge of climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, Namibia is among the countries that support the appointment of the UN Special Envoy on Water to place and maintain the topic of water high on political agenda, mobilise necessary action, resources and support for accelerating the achievement of SGD 6 and water related goals and targets by 2030.

6. Challenges Overview of the challenge, current status and inter-linkages

Access to safe drinking water, hygiene and sanitation for all remains a challenge. About 89% of rural communities have access to safe drinking water within the distance of 2.5km and 46% have access to safely managed sanitation.

i. Financing

Enough finances are required to develop water infrastructure and sanitation to reach all corners of the country. Namibia requires about N$ 11 billion for bulk and rural water supply infrastructure projects in the next 5 years and only secured about N$ 3 billion from loans and budget allocation. At continental level, the African Investment Programme will assist in leveraging finances for water infrastructure.

ii. Data and information

Data collection and information generating requires information. Most country collects basic information for their reporting. With the SDG monitoring and reporting, other information not usually collected is required to complete the reporting. This requires coordination of institutions responsible for water, sanitation, environment, finance, etc.

Managing data and information is a costly exercise. For a large country like Namibia, switching to telemetry system prove to help in coverage. Water information systems are currently not integrated (surface, ground and quality are all in different databases).

iii. Capacity development

Countries are developing water infrastructure. They work well until some parts need to be replaced. Without maintenance infrastructure tend to age and deteriorate fast. The project funding doesn't always include operation and maintenance and spare parts. As such infrastructure funding should include allowance for capacity building and for Operation and Maintenance.

iv. Innovation

Namibia is very innovative when it comes to increasing water balance. In view of climate change, no water is wasted in Namibia. Waste water is reclaimed for potable use, gardening and industry use. Desalination is seawater is growing, with the green hydrogen production as well. Extra water will be used for drinking or other industrial use. We need a strategy to promote water re-use fit for different uses, and develop appropriate quality standards and monitoring.

v. Governance

The Water Act currently used to manage, protect, conserve and control water in Namibia is still the 1956 Water Act developed for South Africa and some parts made applicable to Namibia. The Water act of 2013 has been promulgated by Parliament, however the regulations still have to be finalised and gazetted. The National Water Policy White Paper (2000) and the Water Supply and Sanitation Policy (2008), provide guidance according to the integrated water resource management principles. However, water management is also based on international water laws, especially for transboundary systems. Namibia has signed agreements with other riparian countries to jointly manage all her shared rivers.

vi. Recommendations

Reaching the SDG 6 by 2030 has proven to a challenge of different levels in regions and countries. Water cross-cut all the sectors and SDGs, and a lot needs to done. For example:

- Integrated water planning and coordination need to be encouraged at all level.
- Strengthen transboundary water cooperation among states sharing water resources, rivers and aquifers.
- A proposed Special Envoy for Water will raise the importance of water and different levels and platform.