



Political and economic stability

By HE HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBA

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

In 2004, Namibia adopted Vision 2030, a long term development framework to guide the country's development and strategies to achieve its national objectives.

I am pleased to be associated with this highly prestigious and international publication called FIRST. It is a great pleasure for me to visit London to open, in my capacity as Chairperson of the South African Development Cooperation (SADC), the Africa Business Forum, which will take place from 22-23 June 2011. This year's Forum will focus on the theme SADC "Regional Integration and Drivers of Growth".

However, while in the United Kingdom, I would also like to focus on some bilateral issues. I am pleased that this publication will aid our efforts to highlight the comparative advantages and investment opportunities that Namibia can offer to potential investors. We have put in place highly competitive incentives to bolster our efforts aimed at the promotion of trade, expansion of the tourism sector, broadening the manufacturing base, and modernizing our services sector. These efforts form part of a strategic and deliberate focus of my Government.

At Independence in 1990, Namibia inherited an economy characterized by a narrow industrial base and heavy dependence on the production and export of primary commodities such as beef, fish and minerals. In order to overcome this structural weakness, the Government committed itself to a strategy of economic diversification aimed at creating more dynamic industrial and service sectors through increased manufacturing activities, promotion of value addition to locally produced raw materials and the modernization of our financial and telecommunication sectors. Today, we have a modern financial sector and our telecommunication network has been fully digitalized.

Geographically, Namibia is a large country, with a population of some 1.8 million people. We pride ourselves on political stability and a multiparty democratic system of Government. The country is strategically located along the south western Atlantic Coast of Africa, which makes it an important gateway for imports and exports to and from the sub-region.

Many destinations in Southern Africa are easily accessible via our ports, roads, railways and with

the national airline, Air Namibia. The airline also flies frequently to and from Europe, via Frankfurt in Germany. Namibia also provides access to wider markets of some 200 million people through its membership of various regional groupings such as SADC and other trade agreements.

In 2004, Namibia adopted Vision 2030, a long term development framework to guide the country's development and strategies to achieve its national objectives. Vision 2030, our five year National Development Plans and our Poverty Reduction Strategy are linked to Namibia's international commitments, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

This linkage provides a direction in which all stakeholders and partners should be moving including Government departments, academic institutions, communities and civil society. Our aim is to mobilize local resources as well as support from international development partners to improve the quality of life of the people of Namibia and to bring them on par with industrialized nations by the year 2030.

Namibia's classification as an upper middle income country has left it without the traditional support through development aid and soft loan financing. Within these limited parameters, we have moved towards increased commercial trade and investments to overcome the socio-economic discrepancies that still exist, including the challenges of HIV/Aids, poverty and un-employment.

Our aim is to mobilise local resources as well as support from international development partners

Tourism's new horizons



Although the economy is heavily dependent on the extraction and processing of minerals for export, the mining sector only employs about 3 percent of our work force. More than 50 percent of the population is directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture.

The Government is therefore, attaching great importance to value addition to raw materials, the transformation of the agricultural sector through the Green Scheme Policy which is aimed at steering a new green revolution, and development of other sectors where we have a competitive edge.

Our marine resources are among the richest and most productive in the world with unpolluted fishing grounds. After independence, the Government implemented a resource management system that incorporates a highly effective and efficient system of monitoring, incorporating control and surveillance measures in order to help our fish stocks to recover. Over the years, our surveillance efforts have been very effective against illegal fishing by foreign fleets.

Like many other nations, Namibia regards illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing as a serious threat to fish stocks at the national, regional and international level. As such, we view it as the greatest threat to sustainability of fisheries and marine resources. Fishing rights or rights of exploitation remain the central element of the Government's fisheries management regime.

Both internationally and domestically, Namibia continues to promote our tourism industry on the basis of a unique variety of wildlife, natural wonders, contrasting beautiful scenery and the diverse cultures

of the friendly Namibian people.

The tourism sector is the fastest growing in our national economy in terms of its contribution to our Gross Domestic Product. The number of tourists who visit the country has increased tremendously in recent years. Tourism is now the third largest contributor to the country's total GDP after mining and fisheries. As we try harder to penetrate international markets, we will retain our focus to improve and increase market share in the European tourist market. The overall 3.9 percent growth experienced by Namibia in the European source markets against the 8.3 percent in other overseas markets is an indication that the country still faces a daunting challenge in exploiting the European market fully.

We will continue to address challenges such as socio-economic inequalities, poverty and unemployment, which can impede the growth and development of our country. For this reason, my Government has decided to invest heavily in the education and training of our people, especially in areas of science, technology, mathematics and skills development. Above all, we will continue to embrace policies that promote economic growth such as manufacturing and value addition.

Namibia provides an ideal environment for adventure, leisure and relaxation. Our country has a range of choice destinations for those who want to take a break from the stresses of daily life. We look forward to welcoming all FIRST magazine readers soon in Namibia, for business as well as tourists and as friends.

F

Namibia's beautiful scenery is a key tourism asset

