
INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON DROUGHT AND AGRICULTURE

PREDICT, PLAN, PREPARE: STOP DROUGHT BECOMING A FAMINE

FAO, 19 JUNE 2017

SPEECH DELIVERED BY HON. MINISTER JOHN MUTORWA
MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE, WATER AND FORESTRY OF NAMIBIA

1.1 H.E. Dr Hage G. Geingob, the President of the Republic of Namibia, who was invited to attend this very High Level Seminar, has, through me, conveyed and extended his and Namibia's: Greetings, Best Wishes and sincere Congratulations, to you, Dr Jose Graziano da Silva, FAO's Director General; as well as to the Seminar's Co-Organizers, namely: the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

1.2 Through his letter, to the FAO Director General, dated 7 June 2017, President Geingob, inter alia, stated the following: As you have mentioned, Namibia has been at the forefront of spearheading the work on African resilience and preparedness for Drought. We therefore appreciate this invitation, as it offers a platform, at which, we can present Namibia's continued efforts, towards championing the implementation of Drought mitigation measures. I wish the Seminar, a resounding success.

1.3 Something on the geography of our Country, Namibia. Geographically, Namibia is located in the South Western part of the Continent of Africa. In the North, the Country borders with Angola; Botswana in the East; South African in the South and the Atlantic Ocean, in the West. Furthermore, the Country is sandwiched between TWO, World famous Deserts, namely: the NAMIB Desert in the West; and the KALAHARI Desert in the East. The Country is thus, largely arid or dry; hence, the reference in Country's NATIONAL ANTHEM to: "Contrasting Beautiful Namibia – Namibia, Land of the Brave; Beloved Land of Savannahs."

1.4 Even though, NATURAL DISASTERS, like DROUGHTS, and their usual deadly consequences, are never welcomed by us, human beings, it is logically unavoidable to admit that: droughts, have, so to say, become part and parcel of our activities and our actual being, in Namibia; and, I am sure, elsewhere, too – particularly during this time of Climate Change!

1.5 As Namibia, we fully associate ourselves with; and indeed, support this High Level Seminar's appropriate and fitting theme, namely: "DROUGHT AND AGRICULTURE: PREDICT, PLAN, PREPARE: STOP DROUGHT BECOMING FAMINE." Furthermore, FAO Director General, Professor Jose Graziano da Silva's pronouncement that: "We cannot avoid drought, but we can stop them from becoming famine," is absolutely in line with President Geingob's directive, issued in 2016, where he declared a State of Drought Emergency in the Country, that: "No human being should die, as a direct consequence of the 2016 Drought Emergency."

1.6 In terms of institutional or organisational preparedness, Namibia is quite, relatively speaking, well prepared. We have, through a Law, established a DIRECTORATE OF DISASTERS RISK MANAGEMENT (DDRM), within the Office of the Prime Minister. Work to establish DDRM commenced, two years after Namibia's independence, on 21 March 1990, that is: in 1992 – the year in which Namibia experienced a very devastating DROUGHT. Admittedly, we still need a lot of experts' support, to build our Capacity and Resilience, specifically in the areas of predicting, planning and actual preparation for and of Drought.

1.7 Finally, we fully associate ourselves with the Seminar's overall objectives, thus: "this Seminar seeks to promote pro-active, integrated action that engages actors within and beyond the Drought Community. By engaging in this way, the Seminar hopes to highlight existing best practice, drawn from different context, drive the sharing of knowledge and promote the implementation of integrated, holistic drought intervention," (FAO PROGRAMME CONCEPT NOTE, #2017 WDCD, Page 5).

1.8 Once again, that you so much, for having invited our Country, Namibia, through our President, H.E. Dr Hage G. Geingob; as a participant in the deliberations of this International Seminar on Drought and Agriculture: Predict, Plan, Prepare: Stop Drought Becoming a Famine, here at the FAO's Head Office, in the eternal beautiful City of Rome.