



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF FISHERIES AND MARINE RESOURCES

ANNUAL MINISTERIAL ADDRESS TO THE FISH INDUSTRY

BY

HON. BERNHARD ESAU (MP)

MINISTER OF FISHERIES AND MARINE RESOURCES

AT

WALVIS BAY MUNICIPALITY HALL

17 FEBRUARY 2017

- Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Honorable Chief Samuel Ankama;
- His Worship the Mayor of Walvis Bay; Councilor Wilfred Immanuel;
- Distinguished Councillors present;
- Honorable Governor Cleophas Mutjavikua, represented here by his Advisor;
- Matti Amukwa Chairperson of Namibian Confederation of Fishing Associations;
- Jacob Penda General Secretary of (NAFAU) - Namibian Food and Allied Workers Union;
- Right Holders in our fisheries;
- Other members of our fisheries and related industries;
- Members of the Media;
- Invited Guests;
- Members of senior management staff of the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good morning

I am indeed honoured and grateful to address you this morning, dear members of the fishing industry, fishery-related industries, invited

guests and stakeholders of our fisheries sector. The annual address to the industry is a good tradition which provides an opportunity for all of us to come together at the beginning of every year to take stock of how the industry is doing, talk about the pertinent issues affecting the sector, and share the main focus areas of the year ahead. I hope everyone had a good break over the holidays and returned well rested, refreshed and ready to engage anew.

Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to state, right at the beginning of my address, that the state of our fisheries is strong and vibrant. Fisheries sustains about 16,800 jobs directly, and provided about N\$ 10 billion in FOREX earnings in 2016, which makes this sector the second most important forex earner for the Country after mining. Value addition in the sector is increasing, and I am optimistic that in 2017 we will do even more.

Extension of Fishing Rights:

Let me start by addressing the policy issues related to fishing rights. In 2016, the Ministry extended several fishing rights, with conditions, in accordance with provisions of the Marine Resources Act, 2000. There are still about seven other extensions of rights that are still under consideration, and these will be processed in terms of our policies and regulatory framework. I want to request these right holders to submit any remaining information to my officials immediately. I assure you that this is my priority now, and I will finalise on the matter as soon as possible.

I have noted that some right holders are not complying with the conditions of rights in a timely manner. In this regard, I wish to remind the right holders concerned, and indeed all right holders, that conditions to rights must be adhered to promptly, and evidence of such compliance must be provided to the Ministry in a timely manner, in order to maintain the validity of your fishing rights. In line with our policies and Marine Resources Act, those who do not comply with conditions of their fishing rights should not expect any extensions, and are at risk of losing them altogether.

I am aware that 33 fishing rights in several commercial fishing subsectors are due to expire on 31st December 2017. These rights are: one which has completed 10-year duration, 19 which have completed 15-year duration, and 13 which have completed the 20-year duration. I am aware that my officials have requested the right holders in the categories of 10 and 15-year duration for information pertaining to the performance of their rights for evaluation. Once the outcome of the evaluation process completed, the right holders concerned will be informed accordingly.

With respect to fishing rights which have completed the 20-year duration, the Ministry is still in consultation with the Office of the Attorney General on the next steps, in line with our policies and legislation. I will notify the affected right holders in the shortest time possible on the outcome of this consultation.

Policy and Regulatory aspects

Ladies and gentlemen, Last year, I informed on the progress made on the Namibia fisheries policy review. I am happy to note that the draft policy has been reviewed to incorporate some of the important aspects learnt in 2016, and is now ready for tabling to CABINET in the next few weeks. I am also happy to note that most of the provisions in this draft policy are already in line with provisions in the Marine Resources Act 2000, Aquaculture Act 2002, and Inland Fisheries Resources Act, 2003. This implies that we can already proceed to implement the policy intentions already, without having to go for amendments from Parliament.

Dear right holders, Our Ministry, together with other Government Institutions, is involved in the development of the National Development Plan (NDP5), which is now at its final stages. This Plan, which is in line with our Harambee Prosperity Plan, is instrumental in guiding Namibia to realize our Vision 2030. The Ministry is also revising its Strategic Plan since the current one is coming to an end this year. My officials will be in touch with you to ensure that the industry is included in the formulation of the new strategic plan 2018 -2022.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in 2016 we also commenced a process to develop a scorecard for all right holders in order to streamline fishing quota allocation. This process is aimed at measuring performance of all right holders objectively, and hence facilitate predictability in quota allocation process, which is important for business planning. This

scorecard is aligned to Sections 33 and 39 of the Marine Resources Act, 2000, hence does not require regulatory changes before implementation. I wish to thank all right holders for participating actively in the process of developing the parameters of this score card.

I am informed that all right holders have submitted the scorecard data which was requested, and that my officials are now busy analyzing the information received. I am also informed that many right holders did not include critical data in their submissions, a situation which is complicating the evaluation process. I wish to inform all right holders that this Scorecard is an important part of the transformation agenda on fishing quota allocation process, which the Government is determined to implement.

The Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources is keen to reward those right holders who embrace inclusivity in their business operations, who are willing to increase their shareholding held by Namibians, who are keen to procure their goods and services locally, who include women, workers, disabled, youth and people from economically disadvantaged communities in their beneficiation mechanisms.

My Ministry has received several complaints from right holders mainly concerning lack of sound governance principles in the running of joint ventures, catch agreements and other business operations in the fishing industry. Whereas we will not micro-manage business agreements between right holders, the Ministry has a duty to ensure fairness and equity in the beneficiation arising from quotas allocated. Those groups of

right holders, or partnerships in right holding who demonstrate a lack of capacity to manage their beneficiation in terms of sound corporate principles can be sanctioned in terms of the Marine Resources Act, 2000. I therefore call upon all right holders to resolve their differences amicably, ensure they have routine and inclusive board meetings, and that decisions are taken at corporate and not personal level.

Those right holders who do not sufficiently invest or participate in this fishery should expect less quotas in 2017. Our measure for employment creation is number of quality jobs per metric ton allocated. Those who do not add sufficient value will continue to have their quotas transferred to those who add more value, create more jobs, pay more taxes, levies and fees, procure more locally and hence contribute to the Government goal of equitable wealth distribution from our fisheries to all Namibians.

Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to say that the importance of this criteria cannot be over-emphasized, and that I am keen to implement it without further delay. I have asked my staff to spend minimal time verifying information from right holders who have not submitted all the required information for evaluation. Those who will not respond promptly will be evaluated only on the basis of the information received, and awarded only the proportion of quotas that they qualify for. I have instructed my staff to complete this process in the next two weeks so that I may use it while releasing quotas that are still retained in reserves or yet to be allocated.

Regulations published in 2016:

Ladies and Gentlemen, The Ministry, in an effort to strengthen the regulatory environment of our fisheries, published the following Regulations in the Government Gazette:

1. A **Notice prohibiting monofilament nets as a fishing gear** (Government Gazette No. 6197 of 15 December 2016, published under Inland Fisheries Resources Act, 2003). This prohibition will not affect the use of multifilament nets.
2. A **declaration of the Zambezi/Chobe river system shared with Zambia and Botswana as a fisheries reserve** for the period 1 December to 28 February every year (closed fishing season) (Government Gazette No. 6197 of 15 December 2016). This Notice was done in consultation with Zambezi Regional Council and all relevant Traditional Authorities.
3. A **Notice declaring the Kasaya Channel, in the Impalila Conservancy area as a fisheries reserve** (Government Notice No. 6197 of 15 December 2016). I am keen to extend this model to other areas in the Zambezi and Kavango East and West regions in order to empower riparian communities to manage their own fisheries resources.

4. A **Notice prohibiting harvesting of kabeljou (kob) within the area between Pelican Point and Sandwich Harbour on the Walvis Bay coast line** for the period January to March every year (Government Notice No 5985 of 2016). This is a Closed Area notice regarding the Plaatjies area from all angling activities for the period stated, in order to protect the silver kob brood stock. I, however, understand that anglers are still catching in this area under the pretext of not being well informed. I warn such trespassers that ignorance is not an excuse and any uncertainties can be verified with our regional offices. I urge our inspectors, in partnership with the police to ensure that the law takes its course on those found to be violating this Notice.

Measures to regulate the incidental by-catch of seabirds in the hake demersal trawl and longline fisheries were gazetted on 19 November 2015 (Gazette No. 5877). Take note that these were amended on 15 April 2016 (Gazette No. 5990). It is thus mandatory for all hake trawl and longline vessels to use bird-scaring devices, called Tori lines. I would like to appeal to those few vessels that have not yet done so to comply with these regulations. I would also commend the large pelagic longline fishery, for many of their vessels have already voluntarily acquired these devices. We aim to make this mandatory for this fishery in the near future.

Economic performance of fisheries

Ladies and gentlemen, during the period of 2016/17, the total TAC for various fisheries was 521,714MT, compared to 528,696MT in 2015/2016, representing a marginal decrease of about 1%. The total landings for 2015/16 were 514,297MT, while preliminary landings for 2016/17 as at December 2016 stand at 458,000MT.

The overall export value of fisheries in 2015/2016 is about N\$10 billion, when converted from the various foreign currencies received. This significant revenue may be attributed to improved catches with regard to sizes, favorable exchange rates, increased value addition, and better prices in some markets.

The Namibian dollar (N\$) appreciated markedly against the main trading currencies from January to December 2016 as follows: from N\$16.38 to N\$14.08 against the US\$ and from N\$17.79 to N\$14.61 against the Euro. This decrease in exchange rates against the local currency meant that for every kilogram of Namibian fish and fishery products exported, our industry earned less in N\$ in 2016 as compared to 2015 when the N\$ was slightly weaker when compared to the two currencies, as is the case now. The average diesel price at the coast was recorded at N\$9.70/L in January 2016 and this increased to N\$10.30/L by December 2016, an increase which was which was detrimental to operators in the fishing industry.

However, these figures must be seen in the context of the previous 3-year average of about 10 N\$ to 1US\$, and about 90 US\$ per barrel crude prices, which were used as a benchmark in setting salaries and other operating costs in the sector. This implies that the sector, on the basis of current barrel oil prices and forex exchange rates when compared to 2013/2014 levels, is earning about 25% more in N\$ terms. I wish to remind the fishing industry, as I did in my last year speech, to make savings and re-invest these earnings into the sector in order to cushion yourselves against difficult economic times in the future.

Investments:

Ladies and gentlemen, the total investment in the fishing industry was recorded at about N\$174 million in 2015, and N\$113 million in 2016. These consisted of about N\$103 million in hake fishery which was mainly spend on purchase of shares in companies, N\$1.8 million in horse mackerel fishery, and N\$8 million in crab fishery, mainly spend on construction of a new factory.

I wish to call upon all right holders and other stakeholders in the fishery to increase investments in the sector, especially in value addition and other land-based activities. I am aware that in most fisheries we have sufficient fishing effort, and in this regard I would like to call upon Namibian shareholders to consider increasing their investments in shares in existing fishing vessels and processing facilities.

Socio economic contributions:

Ladies and gentlemen, my Ministry lays special emphasis on corporate social responsibility by fishing companies towards less fortunate members of our society. I wish to thank right holders for heeding to this call, and contributing generously towards activities such as drought relief in several parts of our country that have been affected by hunger since last year, promotion of enterprise development, building of schools, hospitals and police facilities.

During 2016, about N\$25 million was contributed as CSR by various members of the fishing industry, consisting of about N\$ 16 million from horse mackerel subsector, N\$6.6 million from monk fishery, N\$ 1,4 million from crab fishery, and about N\$ 590,000 from seals subsector. CSR is an important aspect of our fishery which, apart from helping distribute the benefits of our fishery to various members of our society, helps industry to connect with the wider public through joint activities.

Landed Value:

Dear right holders, the landed value of all Namibian fishery species was determined in 2015 by my Ministry in collaboration with the entire industry and Department of Customs in the Ministry of Finance. As you are aware I decided in 2016 to keep landed values for all fisheries at the published 2015 levels. However, the 2017 landed values will be determined and published by April 2017.

Landed value is an important benchmark in our fisheries, and is referred to in our Acts and Regulations as a basis for calculating value earned, economic size of our fishery, and resource rent levels. As usual your cooperation in this exercise will be highly appreciated.

Resource Rent

Distinguished participants, the Government is keen to ensure that all taxes, levies and fees which are due to the State are paid promptly. This is the right thing to do, in consideration of the gratitude the Government has accorded right holders in allowing them exclusive access to our fisheries resources, which belong to all Namibians. All those who may be having any arrears in terms of taxes, levies or fees should pay them immediately, so that the Government may use such resources to support economic development in various parts of the country, thereby distributing fisheries wealth to as many Namibians as possible.

I wish to remind all right holders that the overall taxes, levy and fees burden in all our fisheries was estimated in a previous study at less than 5% of the landed value of the entire fishery. Our Marine Resources Policy provides that basic level of levies and fees will vary between 5 and 15% of the first hand value. My Ministry is keen to harmonize current levies and fees levels, while promoting value addition and employment creation. These levy and fees harmonization are aimed at increasing State Revenue, and ensuring that operational activities at the Ministry, which are essential for facilitating fishing and other fishery activities by right holders, are sustainably managed.

In this regard I wish to call upon the fishing industry to work hand in hand with the Ministry to ensure that we run our fishery sustainably. This is more important during this period of downward revision of budgets by the Government, whereby our Ministry budget for 2017/2018 has been reduced by about 42%. Fisheries is perhaps the only sector of our economy where the Government has to invest a lot of resources every year in order for the industry to function. Right holders would not be able to go fishing unless the Ministry invests heavily in stock assessment in order to set a TAC and ultimately allocate quotas. Unless Government invests heavily in MCS activities including aerial and sea patrols, our stocks would be decimated by IUU fishing, leaving little for our right holders. This requirement for continuous Government expenditure is mainly why the Marine Resources Act establishes a Marine Resources Fund for the purpose of meeting the costs of these activities, which are critical for the proper functioning of the private sector.

I wish to inform all right holders that the Ministry is making arrangements to discontinue cash payments for licenses or other payments. Administrative arrangements on this matter will be communicated to all concerned persons shortly.

Trade Facilitation

Ladies and gentlemen, as you are aware, the SADC-EU EPA trade agreement was completed successfully in 2016, and is in place since 1st

October 2016. This is an important agreement which guarantees our fisheries products market access to the European Union, which is our most important export destination.

I am informed that an awareness workshop on the implementation of the EPA took place on 15th September 2016 in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Industrialization, Trade and SME Development (MITSD) and Namibia Trade Forum. The aim of the workshop was to sensitize the fisheries sector on the provisions in the EPA that might have an impact on exports.

I am also informed that our Ministry is part of a new EU sponsored SADC project coordinated by MITSD, focusing mainly on capacity development on member states on SPS (sanitary and phytosanitary standards) issues, which will be running till October 2019. I urge the directorates concerned, especially PPE and aquaculture, to collaborate with industry in this initiative and ensure timely implementation of this project.

Trade negotiations on market access between the three regional economic blocs (COMESA-EAC-SADC) on rules of origin are still outstanding. These negotiations, which are being coordinated by MITSD, are important for fisheries sector considering our increasingly important export of fish and fishery products to markets within Africa. I welcome the industry to send views and aspects that would add value to our regional trade to our Ministry so that we may ensure their inclusion in the final drafts.

Eco Labelling of Hake Fishery

Ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to inform you that Namibia has formally agreed to commence the Marine Stewardship (MSC) certification process of Namibia's hake fishery. In this regard, I have appointed a coordination committee consisting of participants from both industry and the Ministry to oversee this process. I am happy to note the progress made on this matter, and I thank the hake association for offering to pay for the costs associated with this certification process.

The Chairperson of the coordination committee has informed me that Marine Stewardship Council in London will conduct a 5-day training of all staff and industry persons involved in the certification process from 13 to 17 March 2017, and that pre-assessment audits may commence at the end of March 2017.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are confident to subject our hake fishery to this certification process because we believe that it is sustainably managed, a fact which is evidenced by the status of our stocks, and the serious management measures we have put in place, in line with our Hake Management Plan. This certification is important because, apart from attesting our management measures, it will help assure consumers of our hake worldwide that this fishery is sustainably managed. This will result in increased access to lucrative niche markets, which will benefit our hake fishery. I therefore urge all those involved in this

process to work hard to ensure that it is completed successfully, and in a timely manner.

State of our Fisheries Stocks

Ladies and gentlemen, Most of our commercially important stocks are showing signs of recovery, although there is still a need to rebuild these to maximum sustainable yield (MSY) levels, in order to ensure optimal contribution to our economy. There are, however, some stocks which appear to be in a very precarious situation and for which urgent management interventions are needed to prevent them from total collapse.

Hake

The stock assessment results for the hake, which was conducted in September 2016, showed that the overall stock biomass has increased by 21.5% from 1,431,870 to 1,740,260 tonnes, but the spawning biomass is still below a biomass that can produce an MSY of 274 000 tonnes. We therefore need to continue with efforts to manage this stock so that catches are brought closer to MSY level. It is also worth noting that the recruitment estimated during 2016 was around 24 billion, well above the long term average of 17 billion, and these small fish, once fully recruited to the fishery by next year, are expected to further improve the outlook of the hake stock.

Horse Mackerel

The stock assessment results for the horse mackerel, which was conducted in September 2016, indicated that the stock is currently

above the MSY level of 312 000 tons and that the overall stock has increased by 4.6% from 1,386,410 to 1,449,930 tons. However, the catches for the 2015 fishing season of around 316,000 tons are above the MSY and thus there is a need to bring them to a level where this stock shall continue to be exploited at a sustainable level. In this regard, the Ministry shall endeavor to finalize the Horse Mackerel Management Plan this year.

Pilchard

The Pilchard stock is still in a precarious situation as I reported to you last year. During the most recent stock assessment, conducted in November 2016, recruitment was found to be poor for the past consecutive 6 years as it remained below the long-term average of 3 billion recruits, and the spawning stock biomass in the areas surveyed was also found to be close to zero. The Ministry shall intensify research in this fishery during the current fishing season in order to evaluate any new migratory patterns, and continue to take a precautionary approach in managing the Pilchard stock to increase the chances for significant stock recovery.

I am aware of recent concerns raised on this fishery, and wish to assure all of you that we have been lowering the TAC in this fishery by about 5,000MT every year since 2012 except this year when we have frozen it at last year's levels. All procedures for the management of this fishery, as provided for in the Marine Resources Act are being followed to the letter. The Ministry shall also develop a Management Plan for Pilchard, which

will greatly enhance the management goals set for the recovery of this stock.

Monk

The last assessment conducted in March 2016 has estimated the total biomass to have increased by 3.4 % from 61 870 to 64 000 tonnes. However, there is a need to conduct more studies on the behaviour of monk fish, similar to those on hake and Horse Mackerel. Currently, very little is known on where Monkfish spawns, as well as on its feeding pattern. I, once again, call upon our scientists and the Monkfish industry to work tirelessly together and conduct more studies on this commercially valuable resource.

Crab

The assessment conducted in September 2016 on the deep sea red crab stock shows that the fishable biomass grew by 10.6% from 26 561 to 29 366 tonnes. The assessment also showed some stabilisation of average sizes for both males and females. The crab stock therefore continues to be more stable, when compared to other commercially exploited stocks.

Rock Lobster

The Rock Lobster stock shows some positive signs of recovery, such as the increase in the fishable biomass by 20.8% from 1477 to 1784 tonnes during the last assessment conducted in September 2016. A consistent increase in annual CPUEs (catch per unit efforts) has been observed since the 2011/12 fishing season. I am therefore calling upon the fishing industry to put in more effort in catching the quotas allocated to

them and avoid the underperformances which were observed over the past years.

Tuna and Tuna-Like species

As I reported to you last year, our country continues to underperform over the past years with regard to exploiting our quotas for Southern Albacore and Swordfish, as allocated by ICCAT. Our Ministry, in partnership with the Ministry of Mines and Energy, is busy conducting a study to understand the possible impact of activities in the ocean such as seismic surveys, on the performance of our large pelagic sector.

Seals

The results of the survey conducted in December 2014 survey showed that our seals stock is in a good state and that the animals are widely distributed along the Namibian coast, consisting of about 26 colonies, whose distribution is expanding towards the northern part of Namibia and the southern part of Angola. As I emphasised to you last year, Namibia shall always be guided by scientific recommendations based on most latest aerial seal surveys in setting a TAC for sealing seasons.

Orange Roughy

The Ministry conducted a successful survey in July 2016 to determine the current biomass of orange roughy. This is the first survey since the moratorium was introduced on this fishery in 2008. Our scientists are currently busy finalizing the results, and recommendations on this fishery are planned to be released in due course.

Coordination of Marine Activities

The Government is increasingly focusing on blue economy approach to the management of all activities in our marine environment. These include fisheries, marine mining, marine transport, and leisure and touristic activities. The blue economy approach was a major point of focus during the recent Economic Diplomacy conference organised by MIRCO, and is part of the main considerations in the current NDP5 formulation.

Further, the Government is in the process of developing the Ocean Policy, which is led by our Ministry. This policy, which will increasingly be converted to Blue Economy Policy, is aimed at ensuring close coordination of all players in the marine environment in order to create synergies that enhance blue economy development for all Namibians, and minimise possible conflicts of the various marine users. These efforts will integrate current efforts aimed at developing tools such as Marine Spatial planning (MSP), which is currently being coordinated by our Ministry with support from GIZ MARISMA project.

Monitoring Control and Surveillance (MCS)

Ladies and gentlemen, as you are aware, Namibia has put several measures to ensure compliance with our regulations and deter IUU fishing. I am happy to note that, through cooperation with industry, our MCS measures continue to be effective, despite the financial challenges occasioned by downward budget revisions in the Ministry. In the past one year:

1. The number of IUU Fishing reported within the Namibian Exclusive Economic Zone or at and around the Namibia Northern Maritime border during the period from 1st April 2016 to date is seven (7) compared to one (1) IUU fishing vessel sighted in 2015/16 financial year. I am grateful for the increased vigilance and cooperation between our inspectors, industry and men in uniform on this matter, and the Law will take its course on those who are apprehended.
2. There were 602 cases amounting to N\$417,55 in fines detected during coastal patrols along the Namibian coast for the period from 1st April 2016 to date, mainly associated with kob run, as compared to compared to 987 cases reported in 2015/16 amounting to N\$313, 004 in fines.
3. 44 cases of IUU fishing reported on rivers and Inland water bodies for the period 1st April 2016 to date, compared to 13 cases reported in 2015/16 financial year.
4. 346 cases of violations amounting to N\$32, 450 in fines were detected during land and river patrols for the period from 1st April 2016 to date, compared to 231 cases reported in 2015/16 financial year amounting to N\$97,000 in fines
5. There were 155 confiscated items for inland fisheries during the period from 1st April 2016 to date, ranging from nets, fresh and dry

fish compared to 477 confiscated items reported in 2015/16 financial year.

6. There were 2,317 confiscated items during coastal patrol and road-blocks for the period 1st April 2016 to date, ranging from undersize and excess fish, rock lobsters, mussels and fishing equipment compared to 581 confiscated items during 2015/16 financial year.
7. There were 17 arrests and prosecution during rivers and inland water bodies operations for the period 1st April 2016 to date, compared to 25 cases for the period 2015/16 financial year.
8. There were 204 arrests and prosecution during coastal and road block operations for the period 1st April 2016 to date, compared to 143 for the period 2015/16 financial year.
9. There were 125 fishing vessels captured and tracked through the VMS for the period 1st April 2016 to date, compared to 129 during the 2015/16 financial year.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you can see from this list, our MCS officers are busy at work, despite the current economic challenges. Let me commend and thank those of you who acted as whistle blowers by alerting our inspectors on IUU fishing vessels that were sighted fishing around our borders. Please, continue to do so as responsible citizens. This fishery belongs to all of us, let us all work together to protect it.

Cooperation with Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs)

ICCAT

At the 20th Special meeting of ICCAT in 2016, Namibia was allocated a quota of 3, 600 tons of southern albacore for the 2017 to 2020 rolling period fishing season, similar to the allocation the country received for the previous 3-year rolling period.

Traditionally, ICCAT swordfish quotas are allocated for three rolling years. However, Namibia has been allocated a total quota of 1,168 ton of swordfish for 2017 (one year) only due to lack scientific information. The meeting agreed that stock assessment will be carried out during 2017 and thereafter the quota will be revised.

I urge and encouraged the fishing industry to put in more effort to catch and land their allocated quotas in order to avoid continuous under-catches which may affect the country's future quota allocation. As a government, we are obliged to pay Namibia membership fees and other costs towards participation in this organization. This time round, I intend to take measures to stop the non-performance which has been observed in this fishery over the years. In this regard, I invite the industry to discuss options with the Ministry that can ensure that this quota is fully landed.

Benguela Current Commission (BCC)

As you are aware, Namibia is the current chair of the Benguela Current Commission (BCC). I intent to lay special emphasis during my chairmanship of the BCC on the following areas:

- Development of mechanisms for sustainable co-existence of the various economic uses of the marine ecosystem, including fishing, mining, transport and tourism;
- Strengthening of management measures within the entire BCLME by all the three Member States; and
- Deeper understanding of effects of climate change in the BCLME and ways of mitigating them.

Namibia is also a member of other Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) such as the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (**CCAMLR**) and **SEAFO**.

As a country, we are keen to pay up our membership fees to these organizations, and I urge our scientists and industry to take advantage of information, research and quotas from these organizations to ensure value for money in terms of our membership.

Aquaculture and Inland Fisheries

Ladies and gentlemen, as you are aware, the Government is keen to develop aquaculture and inland fisheries as a viable commercial

activity, in order to diversify our fisheries and reduce pressure on marine resources, and address food security especially in coastal and riparian communities. This includes the implementation of our Aquaculture Masterplan over the next 10 years.

Last year in July we inaugurated the upgrading of the Hardap Inland Aquaculture Centre (HIAC). The new fish production ponds have a capacity of producing between 4 to 7.5 tons of marketable fish per month under optimum conditions. The new re-furbished hatchery will also be able to produce about of 31 000 fingerlings per month, which will be sold to local fish farmers in the south, as well as throughout the country.

The Ministry is keen to improve controls on SPS standards in mariculture, in order to facilitate market access of our mariculture products to lucrative markets across the world. In this regard, the Ministry is developing Namibian Molluscan Shellfish Sanitation, Monitoring and Control Regulations, with the assistance of FAO through a project of the African Solidarity Trust Fund (ASTF). These regulations should be gazetted towards the end of this year.

Shellfish production (mainly oysters) was about 500 metric tons in 2016. Most of the oysters were exported to East Asian and South African markets. The main centers for marine aquaculture production remain Walvis Bay, Swakopmund and Lüderitz, with promising new developments in Oranjemund. Favourable environmental conditions were experienced for most of 2016 at all the aquaculture production

areas. The Walvis Bay aquaculture production area has experienced a few harmful algal blooms during which phytoplankton produced biotoxins that caused Diarrhetic Shellfish Poisoning (DSP) and Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP), which resulted in closure of affected areas, in line with international standards.

Hatcheries at Swakopmund and Lüderitz are now producing oyster and abalone spat for the Namibian aquaculture producers. A milestone which was achieved during 2016 was the establishment of a new oyster hatchery in Lüderitz, which can produce healthy spat for the Namibian industry. This local production of shellfish spat is very important from a biosecurity point of view since it greatly minimizes the risk of disease introductions from other sources.

Promotion of National fish consumption

Ladies and gentlemen, my Ministry is keen to ensure that Namibians eat more fish. This is because fish is one of the super foods promoted for its nutritious qualities such as provision of omega-3, DHA, EPA and other nutrients which are important for Namibia's food security. Namibia is a major fishing nation, and considering our population size, I am confident we can achieve the twin objective of eating more fish, and maximizing benefits from an export-led trade across the world.

The National Fish Consumption Promotion Trust (NFCPT) under my Ministry is spearheading efforts to increase domestic fish consumption. The Trust has 16 fish shops in 12 Regions of the country, and is planning to open new shops in the two remaining regions. Total sales by the trust to-date are about 5,747 MT, value at about N\$61,598,302,

compared to 6, 671 MT sold last year, valued at about N\$61,134,449. I urge the Board to be more innovative to ensure self-sustainability of the Trust, and work with partners to enhance fish consumption nationally to per-capita levels of at least 70kg per person, as experienced in countries such as Norway or Japan, which apart from being major fishing nations, maximize on the nutritional benefits of eating fish.

Maritime Training

Ladies and gentlemen, our industry is knowledge-based. This requires continuous training of ministry and industry staff on skills required in our sector. In this regard, our Ministry has facilitated and encouraged participation of our staff in educational institutions in various parts of the world for both long term and short term trainings. In Addition, the Ministry continues to support NAMFI, in realization of the fact that we need to strengthen our own training facility in order to effectively meet the huge skills gaps in the industry.

I am happy to note that NAMFI trained 1976 trainees in 2016, compared to 684 and 1376 trainees in 2015 and 2014, respectively. I am happy to note that the skills covered included deck and marine engineering officer Class 6 and 5, deck ratings, radio courses and Maritime safety. It is encouraging to note that NAMFI has, since 2012, been doing Vocational Education Training (VET) programs aimed at responding to the need of onshore maritime and fishing industry. These VET trainings include Instrumentation, Welding, Refrigeration and Air-conditioning, Fitter and Tunner.

I urge NAMFI to strengthen linkages with training institutions nationally and internationally, and upgrade standards so that our graduates may be as competitive as any other maritime graduate anywhere in the world.

In conclusion ladies and gentlemen, I once again assure you that the state of our fisheries is healthy and well managed, creating jobs and supporting our Namibian economy effectively. I urge all of us to work together to strengthen our fishery even more.

Namibian fishery belongs to all Namibians. Let us protect it together, let us develop it together, let us sustainably use it together.

I wish you all success in 2017, and the best as we develop our fisheries in 2017.

I Thank You.