

# REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY  
HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBA,  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA,  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 105<sup>TH</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY OF THE SWAKARA INDUSTRY**

**28<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2012**

**WINDHOEK**

*\*Check Against Delivery*

Director of Ceremony,  
Right Honourable Nahas Angula, Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia,  
Honourable John Mutorwa, Minister of Agriculture, Water and Forestry,  
Honourable Members of Parliament,  
Honourable Governor of the Khomas Region,  
Your Worship, the Mayor of the City of Windhoek,  
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,  
Esteemed Chairperson of the Karakul Board of Namibia, Mr Raimar von Hase,  
Esteemed Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Agra Co-operative, Mr Ryno van der Merwe,  
Distinguished Invited Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to start by thanking the Karakul Board for inviting me to this gala evening, celebrating the 105<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the swakara industry. In 1907, the first shipment of karakul sheep arrived in Namibia with German settlers. They were convinced that the breed could adapt and thrive in southern Namibia, because the desert conditions in that part of our country are similar to the geography of Asian countries, where the karakul breed is native.

Over the years, the imported karakul sheep were cross-bred with local sheep breeds, with the aim of selecting animals that were best adapted to local conditions. This led to the production of distinct high quality local pelts, and the establishment of what has become known locally and internationally as the swakara industry.

This industry has put Namibia on the international map as a producer of high quality pelts, which have been used in the design of stylish garments. This is indeed a welcome development in value addition to our natural resources. It is pleasing that the swakara industry has steadily grown and it now supports a total of approximately 600 emerging and commercial farmers.

Although it remains relatively small, swakara is an important pillar in Namibia's agricultural sector as it sustains thousands of livelihoods and creates employment opportunities. Our Government has taken deliberate steps to support the swakara industry in order to encourage further growth and to promote the entry of previously disadvantaged Namibians into the sub-sector.

One of the first steps to support the industry was the 2006 Cabinet decision to declare the swakara industry as an industry of strategic importance to Namibia.

In 2007, the year marking the swakara industry's Centenary Celebrations, our Government gave recognition to the swakara industry's Code of Practice. The Code of Practice sets out among other things, specific standards that the producers of swakara pelts must comply with. The aim is to promote quality of the products by establishing the parameters for quality control and classification of the pelts.

Furthermore, the Code sets out strict ethical parameters regarding the humane treatment of the animals and farming methods. I am informed that this is in line with the international best practices in the production of pelts. I take this opportunity to commend the Karakul Board for taking the vital step of introducing the Code of Conduct for the local pelt industry. This has brought Namibia in line with other pelt producing countries and it will go a long way in enhancing the competitiveness of the swakara industry.

I am pleased to state that in 2008, Cabinet adopted a Resolution that the swakara industry should be supported as part of national initiatives to address the socio-economic plight of our people in the swakara farming regions.

Through the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, Government has joined hands with the Karakul Board to support growth of the sub-sector. For example, technical experts from the Ministry provide training to emerging swakara producers at the Government-owned Research Stations. The Ministry also provides annual financial support to the Karakul Board to carry out some of its activities.

Earlier this month, Honourable John Mutorwa, Minister of Agriculture, Water and Forestry launched the Swakara Support Scheme. Through this Scheme, communal farmers are provided with quality breeding material from the state-owned swakara herds, so that they can build up their own stock and improve their production output and quality. The Ministry has also established a fund to subsidize communal and emerging farmers who buy breeding stock at auctions. Rams and ewes from Government-owned Research Stations are sold at public auctions from time to time.

In order to ensure sustainability, the beneficiaries of the Swakara Support Scheme are obliged to undergo training in pelt production and related farming practices. The training courses are sponsored by the Ministry and are conducted at the Ministry's Research Stations and on private farms.

Another example of Government support to the industry is the Ministry's annual financial contributions. For the past six years, the Ministry has supported the promotional campaigns of swakara in foreign markets. Some of the catalogues sponsored by the Ministry are displayed here tonight.

Director of Ceremonies,

I am impressed by the quality of garments and the creativity of the participants in The Young Designers Competition that I had the pleasure of witnessing here tonight. Please join me in congratulating the winner, and indeed all the participating designers who have displayed such talent and creativity.

I encourage the swakara industry to pro-actively engage our rural communities in order to create a more inclusive industry.

I wish the swakara industry a happy 105<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

I thank you.