

Media Release

Namibia making positive progress at Expo 2020 Dubai

Tuesday, 25 January 2022: Windhoek

Three months after joining 191 other nations as a participant at the Expo 2020 Dubai hosted in the United Arab Emirates, Namibia is well on her way to achieving the ambitious goals set for the expo. Located in the Opportunity district at the expo, the Namibian Pavilion continues to shine a light on the country's unique investment opportunities, highlighting priority sectors such as renewable energy, marine diamonds & mining, tourism & conversation, and cultural heritage.

The expo offers a wealth of opportunities for Namibia to galvanise investment opportunities and explore areas of economic cooperation for mutual benefit with other participating nations. The country is also benefiting in the area of knowledge transfer particularly in terms of technological innovations and other sustainable solutions to economic progression. Essentially, successful participation in the expo provides an opportunity to improve economic complexity through lucrative investment opportunities that will secure long-term benefits such as tourist attraction, job creation and sustainable economic diversification, amongst others. Further to that, investment leads generated at the expo, once concluded, will play a vital role in rebuilding the Namibian economy in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and a sustained contraction over the past few years.

1. Reflecting on the first three months: October - December 2021

a) Pavilion Visitors

Since officially opening its doors on 01 October 2021, the Namibian Pavilion has recorded a steadily increasing visitor count that currently stands at 146,855 representing an average of 37,000 visitors per month. The categories of visitors range from curious expo goers, potential investors to high-ranking government officials including the UAE's Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, His Excellency Sheikh Shakhboot Nahyan Al Nahyan to our RH Prime Minister, Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, amongst others. The pavilion has also hosted a number of Namibian delegations representing numerous sectors and entities including the Environmental Investment Fund, the Road Administration Fund, City of Windhoek, and the Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry – who were in Dubai for various business engagements.

b) Investment Leads:

Namibia's participation at the Expo 2020 Dubai is anchored in the primary objective of positioning the country as an attractive investment destination by stimulating investor interest in the country. In order to be more practical and focused in achieving this goal, a specific target was set to create at least 10 investment leads per month. In this regard, the country has made significant progress in reaching this target.

To date a total of 123 investment leads were generated, which is well above the targeted 10 leads a month. Most investor interest is in the area of Green Hydrogen. Recorded leads indicate investor interest in other key industries such as agriculture, education, tourism, and various trade activities. In terms of country of origin, over 50% of potential investors emanate from the United Arab Emirates, with less than 10% of African origin.

The highlight of the expo so far is the highly successful Namibia Renewable Energy Summit hosted in November 2021, attended by participants from all over the globe and potential investors from China, India, Zimbabwe, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates. The summit was organised with the objective of showcasing investment opportunities in the renewable energy space and to provide insight into the legal framework that governs investments in the Namibian energy sector. The Minister of Mines and Energy, Hon. Tom Alweendo officiated at the hybrid event that featured speakers from the Ministry of Mines and Energy, NamPower and the Electricity Control Board.

2. Travel Restrictions on account of COVID-19

Following the outbreak of the Omicron variant and resultant spike in COVID-19 infections around the world, the United Arab Emirates introduced stringent protocols for health and safety purposes. These include imposing travel restrictions prohibiting visitors from all Southern African countries as well as Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique and Ethiopia, entry into the UAE.

This development poses a challenge particularly for Namibians required to travel to Dubai for expo related business. However, having operated in an uncertain environment on account of the ongoing pandemic for the past few months, the NIPDB had already put strategies in place to effectively manage these types of situations. It is therefore important to note that while travelling to Dubai may be limited, these restrictions do not pose a significant impact on the country's activities at the expo. It is business as usual on the ground and the investment promotion work is continuing unabated.

The NIPDB would like to assure all stakeholders that all expo related events will proceed as scheduled. As a precautionary measure against COVID-19, some of the activities will be hybrid events while others may be hosted virtually. At this stage, the NIPDB can confirm that there are no plans to cancel any of the scheduled events,

although some will be scaled down for health and safety considerations and in compliance with social distance and other protocols introduced by the UAE government. Stakeholder consultations are ongoing to find the most effective approach to achieve our objectives at the expo while safeguarding the health and safety of all people involved. The Namibian team on the ground in Dubai is also tested on a regular basis to ensure they remain safe.

3. Plans for the next three months:

With the expo having passed the halfway point in December 2021, Namibia is putting all efforts to ensure a strong finish in March 2022.

Upcoming events:

In March, Namibia is expected to celebrate its biggest month yet at the expo. With less than two months before the expo concludes, the Namibian Pavilion has put together a schedule packed with events to coincide with the expo's thematic weeks and aligned to the country's own strategic agenda.

The following events will be hosted by the Namibian Pavilion over the next two months. All events will be streamed on the Namibia Expo and NIPDB social media platforms.

a) Tourism Focus: February 2022

The first two weeks in February are dedicated to tourism, showcasing the Namibian travel experience and positioning the country as a globally competitive holiday destination.

b) Mining and Diamond Mining: 14 – 28 February 2022

Various activities are lined up to showcase the opportunities in the mining sector including events curated to shine a light on Namibia's diamond industry, share the Namibian Diamond Story and in particular "the Good Diamonds Do" in Namibia.

c) Namibia Investment Conference: 23 March 2022

The Namibia Investment Conference is envisaged to be the climax event of the country's Expo 2020 Dubai journey and will be one of the final pitches on investment opportunities, brand awareness and export promotion.

d) Namibia National Day: 24 March 2022

All participating countries are accorded an opportunity to celebrate their National Day at Expo 2020 Dubai. Namibia's National Day will be celebrated on 24 March 2022. Part of the celebrations will include a tour of the Namibian and UAE Pavilions, respectively, a parade and performances to showcase Namibia's unique culture.

e) Namibian Braai in Dubai: 24 March 2022

Featuring Namibian cuisine, beverages and music, this multi-sensory event will be a vibrant showcase of Namibia's cultural heritage on the global stage.

The expo has also put together key events in March where high ranking Namibian officials are expected to participate. More information on these and the above-mentioned events will be shared at a later stage.

Conclusion:

The NIPDB as the Investment Promotion Agency for Namibia and custodian of the Namibian Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai would like to assure all stakeholders and the nation at large that the country is on track to achieve the objectives set for the expo. While we acknowledge that the current travel restrictions have stifled some of our plans, we have found a solution to this challenge by leveraging technology to ensure that all investment promotion activities continue as planned. The NIPDB has the mammoth responsibility to ensure a return on the government's investment into this expo. As such the Board remains committed to carrying out this assignment to ensure that the outcomes of the country's participation at the expo positively contribute towards ensuring economic prosperity for all Namibians.

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