



Media Release

11 September 2015

The Namibian Economy: piecing the puzzle together

For Immediate Release

Namwater calls for immediate action on looming water crisis.

On the 10th of September, 2015, the Economic Association of Namibia (EAN) co-hosted a Business Breakfast with the Hanns Seidel Foundation, on the current water supply situation in Namibia.

Due to Namibia's climate and unpredictable rainfall, water has always been a carefully guarded resources for the country. Following a poor rainy season in 2015, only a small proportion of water supply needed to satisfy Windhoek's water requirements was replenished. Should low rainfall levels persist for the 2016 rainy season, the **city will undoubtedly experience major water shortages.**

As such, the aim of the business breakfast was to provide information on the current water situation in Namibia and Windhoek, as well as some of the immediate, medium and long-term solutions to ensure water supply security to the central region of Namibia.

A small team from Namwater highlighted the current critical concerns for Windhoek, noting that the current demand-supply imbalance was driven by long term growth in consumer demand in Windhoek, coupled with inadequate addition of supply to the central regions of the country, most notably Windhoek, in order to match this demand increase. The team further noted that the situation, while a long-term problem requiring a long-term solution, has been further exacerbated by poor rainfall in 2015, and a poor rainfall outlook for 2016.

Due to these factors, forecasts show that at the current rate of use, without any inflows into the **key dams providing water to the city,** these dams **will run dry by the 4th of September 2016.** Thereafter, **Windhoek's water supply would drop to below 30% of current usage levels.** As such, the Namwater team emphasised the need for immediate and drastic saving of water by Windhoek based consumers.

Mr Andre Mostert, Namwater Manager for Hydrology presented an overview on Demand Management and highlighted the urgency of an immediate campaign to mobilise the public on water saving mechanisms that the City of Windhoek and Namwater have identified as well as the need of effective implementation of said mechanisms in order drive water saving. Mr. Mostert noted that if savings of 15% of current usage could be achieved, it may be possible to extend supply capacity up

until the 2017 rainfall season. **As such, Namwater urged consumers to save as much water as possible, targeting savings of 25%, in order to mitigate the severity of the impending crisis.**

Mr. Willem Venter of Namwater noted that **the economic and financial implications of Windhoek's water supply challenges should not be underestimated**, as some of the **largest employers in Windhoek are also some of the most intensive water users** on the central area's water infrastructure. Mr. Venter emphasised the need to manage demand through both conscious reduction in usage, as well as **improved upkeep and maintenance of water infrastructure**, both by households and institutions. He emphasised the importance of reducing wastage of water as a result of leaking taps and toilets across the city.

Mr Hugh Bruce, an Engineer at Lund Consulting Engineers CC provided insights on long-term water demand in the capital, as well as some of the critical solutions to the water crunch facing Windhoek longer term. He highlighted that **irrespective of the current crisis, Windhoek and the central area of Namibia are urgently in need of supplementary water supply** should they continue to grow at present rates. Mr. Bruce noted that there are only two real solutions to the long-term issues, namely drawing water from the Kavongo River, or desalinating and pumping water up to Windhoek from the coast. Both options are likely to be highly costly and take a number of years to implement, thus urgency was emphasised in the selection and implementation of one of the projects.

The **public participants to the dialogue raised questions as to why this crisis has so far been kept relatively quiet**, and how the City of Windhoek planned to drive water savings without the public being aware of the short term crisis. In addition, the participants questioned concerns surrounding the cost of providing water to the city long term, particularly asking **why the Neckertal Dam remained a priority for expenditure, while the capital is running dry** due in part to funding challenges for water infrastructure.

Nicole Bogott of the Hanns Seidel Foundation emphasised in her closing the **drastic need for the public to participate in addressing the current crisis**, noting that the situation required the wide scale concerted effort of the public so as to avoid major crisis in the short term.

The "Water" Business Breakfast is the first in a series of events covering key issues and challenges faced by the Namibian economy. A further Business Breakfast will be held on Housing, which is tentatively set for the 20th October 2015, and a one-day conference on Energy is scheduled for the 4th November 2015 at Safari Hotel in Windhoek.

End.

Contact Person

Mr Rowland Brown, Ms Lauren Davidson
Co-Directors of the Economic Association of Namibia
Email: committee@ean.org.na
House of Democracy, 70-72 Dr Frans Indongo Street
Windhoek West