REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM

SPEECH BY

THE HONOURABLE P.N MALIMA, MP

MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM

AT THE OPENING OCCASION

OF THE

SADC REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON

COMMUNITY BASED NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

ON TUESDAY, 04 MARCH 2003

AT THE

SAFARI COURT

Chairperson,
Your Excellency the U.S Ambassador,
Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Distinguished guests
Friends and CBNRM Colleagues from the Region
Members of the Media
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great honour and privilege to have been accorded this opportunity to be part of this historic event. I am calling this a historic event because it is the first time that we are hosting a SADC regional conference on CBNRM, hence I am greatly honoured to welcome to Namibia delegates here today from other SADC countries.

When one looks back on the relationship between people and natural resources in Namibia, specifically in a pre-independent Namibia, our people were marginalized by the discriminatory laws perpetuated by the previous dispensation. Because of these laws, our people lost their rights over the natural resources that they used to depend on. As a result our people missed out on economic empowerment and prosperity.

After achieving our Independence, the Cabinet of the Republic of Namibia approved the Policy on Wildlife Management, Utilization and Tourism, as well as a policy on the establishment of conservancies in 1995. The Namibia Community Based Natural Resource Management Programme is now widely regarded as an innovative, people-oriented approach to conservation.

We have restored the link between conservation and rural development by enabling communal areas farmers to derive a direct income from the sustainable use of natural resources, for example the use of wildlife where it is applicable and tourism activities.

The results of this process have been fruitful because, various rural communities have made use of this mechanism. I do not think that we could have imagined what impacts we would have on a local, regional or global scale with the granting of legal rights to rural communities over the management and utilisation of their natural resources.

We are still learning and the process is not yet complete but it is with immense pride that we can reflect on the momentous achievements that we have made with the National CBNRM Programme.

While traditional old dispensation conservation approaches have been premised largely on the ability of governments to enforce wildlife protection laws, Namibia's CBNRM Programme generates its success from the high sense of ownership and stewardship responsibility local communities have gained through Namibia's internationally acclaimed enabling conservation policies and legislation.

Rural communities have gained the right to manage, use and benefit from natural resources in their areas. To date 15 rural communities have gained legal status as Communal Area Conservancies. These registered conservancies incorporate more than 39 000.

A further 35 communities are in the process of establishing conservancies. The programme is very prominent in the Kunene, Caprivi, Otjozondjupa, Erongo, Omusati, Hardap and Karas regions.

It is indeed encouraging to see the different Governmental, NGOs, and Civil Society Institutions present here today, because the obvious progression of CBNRM is towards a truly integrated model with various stakeholders, and all natural resources other than wildlife and forests. CBNRM can also be defined as the crux of sustainable rural development and this lies at the heart of the Government of the Republic of Namibia's national development objective as articulated in NDP II and Vision 2030.

We are encouraged by the positive contributions that CBNRM has started to make to livelihoods in several areas, but the time has now come to speed up economic empowerment to bring significant changes to the welfare of our people, and to make the most out of the Natural Resources development potential that people have.

We are, despite these achievements, nevertheless aware that we are dealing with a process of development, which cannot be made to follow a blueprint. We need to expect that new challenges will emerge, but I am confident that, in a spirit of partnership, my Ministry and other partners will keep on finding solutions.

Allow me at this stage to also express my sincere gratitude for the significant support that our development partners have contributed with great enthusiasm for this programme in Namibia, and their recent pledges to continue this support.

In conclusion I would like to encourage all present here today to participate responsibly and with vigour as the fate of many rural communities in Namibia and in the whole region of SADC depend on your wisdom and vision. Hunger, poverty, HIV/AIDS and access to land are of the biggest challenges facing sustainable development in our region. The CBNRM fraternity should deliberate seriously on these issues and I sincerely hope that this conference will create the forum to share and debate these pertinent issues.

I wish you well in your deliberations. With these few words I now wish to declare this CBNRM Regional Conference officially opened.

I thank you.