

STATEMENT BY MRS. ANNA SHIWEDA, DEPUTY PERMANENT SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, WATER AND FORESTRY – NAMIBIA, FOR THE SESSION ON WATER AND SANITATION AT CSD – 16, 13 MAY 2008, NEW YORK.

Thank you Chairperson for the opportunity to highlight some challenges facing Namibia in the sectors of water and sanitation.

Namibia wishes to associate herself with the Review of CSD – 13 on water and sanitation as well as the United Nation’s Report on Trends in Sustainable Development in Africa 2008/2009. Namibia is the driest country in the Sub Saharan Africa region and is prone to erratic rainfall and hence frequent droughts. Food production remains a challenge in a country where water resources are limited to the perennial rivers along the borders with the neighboring countries.

Chairperson, the water and sanitation policy in Namibia strives to contribute towards public health, reduce water collection burden, ensure a hygienic environment, protect water sources from pollution, promote conservation of water, and promote economic development. The operational strategy states that the basic lifeline supply must be provided within 1000 meters of every rural homestead. Consumers must pay for their own water and excessive water usage and wastage is discouraged. The policy further states that water supply to rural communities shall be on a cost recovery basis at least for operational and maintenance of water infrastructure.

Chairperson, allow me to shed some more light on the issue of water and sanitation in Namibia. Currently, the coverage rate for water in both rural and urban areas is about 94%. Although Namibia is ahead in meeting its Millennium Development Goal on access to clean and safe water, it is lagging far behind in providing adequate sanitation to its people. Not much progress has been achieved in sanitation, since only 13 per cent of the rural population has access to improved sanitation coverage, compared to eight per cent in 1990 at independence. Sanitation remains a great concern not only in rural areas, but also in the informal settlements in urban areas.

There is fear in most parts of the country's informal settlements that the poor solid waste, drainage and wastewater management, in addition inadequate water supply might lead to high incidence of water-borne disease outbreaks. Therefore, the government is trying to address the problem of sanitation through the review of the water and sanitation policy. The problem will also receive priority attention during a Cabinet Retreat of Ministers in Namibia scheduled for later this month.

Chairperson, our Government wishes to construct appropriate sanitation facilities throughout the country. With the assistance of the European Union, the Government has recently constructed a state of the art sewage treatment facility in the southern part of the country. We thank the European Union for this assistance.

In conclusion, Namibia is fully committed to efforts aimed at addressing water and sanitation in both urban and rural areas.

Thank you.