



Keynote Address by

Honourable Carl-Hermann Gustav Schlettwein

Minister of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform, MP

At the

Ground breaking for the Ondangwa-Omutsegwonime Project

Ondangwa

28th June 2024

- **Director of Ceremonies**
- **Hon. Elia K Irimari, Governor of Oshana Region**
- **Hon Penda Ya Ndakolo, Governor of Oshikoto Region**
- **Your Worship Paavo Amwele, Mayor of Ondangwa Town Council**
- **Esteemed Regional and Town Council's Councillors**
- **Oshana Police Regional Commander Commissioner Naftali Sakaria**
- **Dr Elijah Ngurare, DED of the Department of Water in the MAWLR**
- **Mr Abraham Nehemia, CEO of NAMWATER and his Management cadres**
- **Madame Kadiva Hamtumwa, Chief Strategy and Corporate Affairs Officer from NAMWATER**
- **Officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform present**
- **Representative from Homefin Properties cc,**
- **Representative from China Jiangxi International**
- **Community and local leaders**
- **Members of the Media**

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests, and Esteemed Colleagues,

I am pleased and it is with a sense of pride that I stand before you today to mark the ground-breaking ceremony of the Ondangwa-Omutsegwonime pipeline replacement project, Phase 1, specifically covering the critical section from Ondangwa to Oshali. This project signifies more than just infrastructure development; it represents a decisive step towards securing a sustainable and reliable water supply for our communities. As has been stated by Cde Abraham Nehemia, the project is our response to the legitimate requests from the community to improve water supply to them. As we commence this pivotal endeavour, I wish to highlight its significance, the challenges we face, and the strategic importance of this initiative.

The Ondangwa-Omutsegwonime bulk water supply scheme, also known as the South East (SE) scheme, has been a cornerstone in providing essential water resources to the Oshana and Oshikoto regions. Spanning approximately 110 kilometres, this scheme conveys potable water from Ondangwa, traversing through Omuthiya and culminating in the Omutsegwonime village. Notably this water supply infrastructure is strategic in nature as it serves as a life line for two regions being the Oshana and the Oshikoto regions respectively. The scheme does not only serve the urban centres but extends to various branch lines such as Onethindi-Onandjokwe, Onathing-e-Onayena, Okatope-Okankolo, Okatope-Omuntele, and several bulk feeder lines of the Directorate of Rural Water Supply (DRWS) pipelines.

In addition to the primary pump station at Ondangwa, several booster pump stations located at Oshali, Okatope, and Omuthiya ensure the effective distribution of water across this extensive network in the two regions. Despite its critical role, the South East scheme is currently still grappling with significant challenges. The demand for water has increased substantially as a result of an increased population and economic growth activities within the regions.

Governments responsibility to ensure secure, sustainable and affordable water supply to all its citizens, whether households, farmers, businesses or communities and local authorities spans wider than providing the bulk water supply. To achieve a

seamless water provision the new strategic plan for NAMWATER includes the provision of safe and affordable water to rural communities. This project gives effect to a fully integrated approach where the bulk supply is effectively linked to the rural distribution network. I may share here that this project is a fine example of how Rural water supply and bulk water supply are complementing our ability to serve the communities in need of water.

The National Developmental Plan 5 has set in place clear targets with regards to the access to potable water for all Namibians. Through the State Owned Enterprise NamWater, the government ensures the provision of bulk water supply as well as the supply to individual customers in various parts of the country such as the northern part. I have been reliably informed that NamWater has identified the need to improve its service delivery of water supply to the Oshana and Oshikoto regions and have prioritised the development of critical water supply infrastructure around the country in order to ensure access to water supply and economic development.

For this particular project that we are breaking ground for today, NamWater has fully funded the project to the value of 91 Million NAD. I would like to commend NamWater for taking this strategic move. Investing in this water infrastructure means that you are investing in the people of this great nation. Through the availability of reliable water supply, the affected communities may engage in community driven business enterprises, develop the SME sector in the two regions and improve the living standards of the people.

An unfortunate aspect, which needs to be addressed is the fact that we loose significant of money and infrastructure through theft and vandalism. Last year alone the MAWLR lost about N\$ 120 million in stolen water pumps and solar panels. Worst of all the communities who were served with clean reliable water lost that existential service. All, the drilling of boreholes, equipping and installing required infrastructure such as a power supply, water tanks and pumps and some distribution lines were de facto lost to the communities. It is not tolerable and we must look better after water infrastructure, because it belongs to the communities, it is your installation and I call upon Traditional Authorities, Regional and Local Authorities to join us in preventing these crimes. We must also cooperate to, if such a crime happened, bring the culprits to book.

This project is more than a technical upgrade; it is a strategic initiative aimed at ensuring the long-term sustainability of our water supply. By modernizing our infrastructure, we not only address current deficits but also position ourselves to meet future demands. This effort is a testament to the power of collaboration and the importance of public-private partnerships in achieving our development goals. Our collective efforts will ensure that our infrastructure is resilient, robust, and capable of supporting the socio-economic growth of both the Oshana and Oshikoto regions as well as the entire nation.

As we move forward, it is essential to view this project as part of a broader strategy to enhance water supply security. Our commitment to sustainable development must also extend towards safeguarding our infrastructure as citizens of this great nation. I therefore call upon all community members to promote responsible water usage and safeguard the infrastructure in order to attain socio-economic development. By doing so, we can ensure that our water resources are protected and utilized efficiently for the benefit of present and future generations.

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to all stakeholders involved in this project. Your dedication and hard work are instrumental in making this vision a reality. I would like to thank Homefin Properties cc and China Jiangxi International for their expertise and commitment to this critical project. Your efforts are crucial in ensuring that we deliver on our promise of a sustainable and reliable water supply for our communities. This is an absolute necessity because water is a basic human right because it is required for life, it is also a fundamental enabler of all socio-economic development.

In conclusion I want to reiterate that the overall priority must remain our ability to supply communities, farmers and businesses with clean water. In this case and as stated earlier we remain with some challenges to reach our target to have 100% access to safe, clean water. This project is creating a pivotal piece of infrastructure bringing us much closer to our target. NAMWATER itself has some capacity to implement the projects, of which there are several that have to be completed simultaneously. However we need to rope in private contractors to augment our capacity for timeous implementation.

I am pleased that we managed to design this project by an in-house capacity, a group of young Namibian civil engineers. and Through an open bidding process got procured capable contractors to construct this component of the Ondangwa-Omutsegwonime bulk water supply scheme. This pipeline and pump station project is the beginning after a large multifaceted and phase water infrastructure structure development programme, which will match delivery with demand for the short and medium term, both form an bulk water supply perspective and rural water supply demand.

With that, I hereby officially unveil the ground-breaking ceremony for the Ondangwa-Omutsegwonime, the contractor is on site ready to start and our in house engineers are here to supervise the work. Let us forge ahead with determination, unity, and a shared vision of progress. Together, we can overcome the challenges we face and build a brighter, more prosperous future for all.

Thank you.