



Statement by

Mr Abraham Nehemia

Chief Executive Officer

for the

Opening of the Etaka-Uuvudhiya Earth Canal

Olushandja Dam South Wall Pump Station, Omusati Region

27 August 2024

Distinguished Guests, Traditional Leaders, Esteemed Farmers, Media Fraternity and Fellow Namibians,

It is with great pride and a deep sense of responsibility that I stand before you today to officially open the rehabilitated Etaka-Uuvudhiya Earth Canal. This project is more than just an infrastructure achievement—it is a lifeline for our communities, our farmers, and our nation. Today, we celebrate not just the reopening of this canal but also the spirit of resilience and unity that has brought us here.

The Etaka-Uuvudhiya Earth Canal, a 130-kilometer marvel, was initially constructed around 1974 by the South African colonial government. It was designed to provide water to the rural communities in the Uukolonkadhi, Uukwaluudhi, Ongandjera, Uukwambi, and Ondonga tribal areas during times of drought. For decades, this canal has played a crucial role in sustaining livestock and agricultural activities in these areas.

However, the years have taken their toll on the canal. The harsh Namibian climate, combined with the natural wear and tear, had reduced its capacity to serve the people and livestock that depend on it. Recognizing this, NamWater, with the full support of our government, embarked on a mission to restore the canal to be in a position save the situation and today, we witness the fruits of collaboration.

The rehabilitation of the Etaka-Uuvudhiya Canal is not just routine maintenance—it is a drought relief initiative that underscores the Namibian government's commitment to its people. The total cost for this operation is nearly N\$3.9 million, generously provided by the Office of the Prime Minister through the Ministry of Agriculture, Water, and Land Reform. This financial support enabled us to assess the canal's condition, undertake necessary repairs, and ultimately restore the flow of life-sustaining water from the Olushandja Dam to the Uuvudhiya area.

The Olushandja Dam, also known as Etaka Lake, is an integral part of our water supply network. Established in 1973, it serves as a balancing and storage reservoir for water from the Calueque Dam on the Cunene River. This dam not only supplies water to towns like Outapi, Oshikuku, and Oshakati but also plays a critical role in feeding the Etaka Canal, ensuring that our rural communities have access to water during the drought periods.

The reopening of this canal brings immense relief to the Omusati, Oshana, and Oshikoto regions. The water that now flows through the canal will fill the natural pans in Uuvudhiya, providing much-needed hydration for thousands of livestock. It will also support small-scale farmers, enabling them to cultivate their land and feed their families. This canal is a beacon of hope for the communities it serves, and its impact cannot be overstated.

In 1992, shortly after our nation gained independence, Namibia experienced one of its worst droughts. The devastation was widespread, with cattle dying in large numbers and communities struggling to survive. It was during that crisis that we learned the importance of being proactive in our water management. Today, we are better prepared, thanks in part to the lessons learned from that difficult time.

As we stand here today, we are reminded of the crucial role that water plays in our lives. Namibia is no stranger to drought, and the challenges it brings to our people, our livestock, and our agriculture. The Etaka-Uuvudhiya Canal is a vital resource that will help mitigate the effects of drought, ensuring that our farmers have the water they need to sustain their livelihoods.

This project is a testament to what we can achieve when we work together. The government, through NamWater, has shown that it is committed to supporting our rural communities. The rehabilitation of this canal is just one example of the many initiatives underway to ensure that all Namibians have access to the resources they need to thrive.

In closing, I want to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who played a role in this project—the engineers, the workers, the government officials, and the local communities. Your hard work and dedication have made today’s event possible. I also want to thank the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Agriculture, Water, and Land Reform for their unwavering support.

As we open the Etaka-Uuvudhiya Canal, let us remember that this is more than just an infrastructure project. It is a symbol of hope, resilience, and progress. It is a commitment to the well-being of our people and our livestock. It is a promise that no matter the challenges we face, we will always find a way to overcome them together.

Lastly, I want to issue a clear warning to those who are disrupting progress by breaking canal banks to divert water into Oshanas for selfish purposes, such as catching fish or making bricks. Be warned: we will be conducting regular patrols along the canal to monitor and prevent these activities. We urge traditional and political leaders, with the support of the Namibian Police, to take serious action against anyone deliberately sabotaging this critical water infrastructure, which is a significant investment by the Government of the Republic of Namibia.

Thank you.