

ANNEX 1



Photo: Victoria Zentilli

OPENING SPEECHES

**Honourable Philemon Malima, MP,
Minister of Environment and Tourism, Namibia
(English only)**

Chairperson, Dr Margarita Clemente,
Distinguished members of the Plants Committee,
Distinguished Delegates and invited guest,
Members of the Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted and honoured to welcome the 14th annual meeting of the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES) Plants Committee to Namibia. I would like to express my appreciation to the Plants Committee for holding this important meeting in Namibia. It is only the second time the Plants Committee meets on the African continent. I therefore take this opportunity to thank you for giving us the honour of hosting this meeting.

Distinguished delegates, You have all undertaken long journeys from your countries to Namibia, and I hope you will feel at home during these few days of your stay with us.

This 14th meeting of the CITES Plants Committee is very important to Namibia for the following reasons:

Firstly, Namibia's indigenous plants have been and continue to be traditionally used. However, through globalization, pressure is now put on certain species to also support global demands.

I have noticed, with much appreciation, that Devil's Claws, (*Harpagophytum*) which is the most exported Namibian plant is included on the agenda of this meeting. I look forward to the outcome of your discussion on this important plant, which is currently a significant source of income for marginalised communities in Namibia.

Distinguished delegates, There are other Namibian plant species that are rapidly coming under similar global demand. *Hoodia*, commonly known as Carrion Flower is one such example. This plant with its appetite suppressing properties is found only in the arid regions of Namibia, Botswana and South Africa, and has dominated discussions in the pharmaceutical industry in Europe and the United States of America over the past five years.

Locally, the plant is used as an appetite depressant and for treatment of minor ailments. My Ministry is currently busy with cultivation trials to get small-scale farmers involved in growing *Hoodia* for commercial trade. Cultivation will reduce the pressure of wild harvesting and prevent over-utilisation. *Hoodia* is a slow growing plant and harvesting requires removing the entire plant as opposed to just part of the plant. It is therefore vital that this plant is protected against excessive harvesting as a result of market demands. I am convinced that successful protection of our plants against excessive trade can only be realized with the assistance of our partners in conservation.

Secondly, the Government and the people of Namibia are strongly committed to biodiversity conservation and the use of our biological resources in a sustainable manner. As signatories to Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and CITES, I am pleased to see CITES and the CBD collaborating on the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation.

Thirdly, I am very impressed with the enthusiasm and determination demonstrated by your committee during its 14 years of existence. Particularly on the assistance provided by your Committee on the *Devil's Claw*, range states in putting together biological and trade data. This work was carried out in conjunction with a Consultant contracted by this Plants Committee. This distinguished Committee further provided much needed guidance and support to range states regarding the management strategies as well as encourage collaboration between range and importing states in their endeavours to ensure that Devil's Claw is utilized in a sustainable manner.

Distinguished delegates

Lastly, I am aware of the difficult task ahead of you and wish you all the success in your deliberations. With these few words, I now have the honour to declare this workshop officially open.

I thank you.

**Prof. Dr Margarita Clemente Muñoz,
Chairman of the Plants Committee and representative of Europe
(English and Spanish only)**

Distinguished Minister of the Ministry of the Environment and Tourism,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Representatives of the Plants Committee,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Observers from Party Countries and from Intergovernmental and Non-Governmental Organizations,
Distinguished Members of the CITES Secretariat
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, present at this opening ceremony:

For me it is an honour and a great pleasure to address you all as Chairwoman of the Plants Committee at this ceremony inaugurating our fourteenth meeting, and to welcome you.

In the first place, on behalf of the Plants Committee, I would like to express our deepest gratitude to the Authorities of Namibia for offering us the excellent opportunity to hold this meeting in Africa and in this wonderful country.

If you remember, the request was formulated by the representatives at our twelfth meeting in the Netherlands, prior to the last Conference of the Parties, and it is finally possible thanks to Namibia's kind invitation. The beauty of this country impresses the mind and the spirit. Its natural heritage is protected and pampered as its most valuable treasure. But such care is not incompatible with sustained use, allowing the country to achieve its aspirations of reaching harmonious development, to which all its inhabitants are rightfully entitled.

Namibia is forging ahead, exercising the right to responsible use of its resources while safeguarding them for the continued enjoyment of future generations. Victor Hugo said: "*The future has many names. For the weak, it is the unattainable. For the fearful, it is the unknown. For the brave, it is opportunity.*" Namibia is a country of brave women and men, and in this future lies their opportunity. The Plants Committee is aware of the problems Namibia faces in its aim to achieve sustained use of its resources, and that is why we are here: to assist, to co-operate with Namibia and with its inhabitants towards reaching this goal. The Convention should not turn into an instrument of punishment; it should not be seen as imposing sanctions. The Convention is an instrument that must foster and encourage sustainable use of resources, in response to the legitimate rights of the countries of origin.

Many thanks to Malan Lindeque and to Pauline Lindeque, whom I have had the honour of knowing for many years, following their tireless work wherever they may be. Thanks also to Elly Hamunyela, one of the participants in the Masters Course I direct. I am very proud of her sense of responsibility, her laboriousness, and, as always, of her good work. And to all the people who have helped organize this Committee meeting so we may feel comfortable in a friendly, relaxed atmosphere that will doubtless be a favourable determining factor for constructive discussions throughout the marathon working sessions we have ahead of us.

I would also like to mention my deep gratitude to Tom de Meulenaer, to Milena Sosa Schmidt, to Victoria Zentilli, and to Pascale Unger for the magnificent work they have done in preparing and organising this meeting. Warm greetings to the team of interpreters, Debbie, Wendy, Antonio and Jorge, who have become regulars at our meetings, with a considerable improvement in interpreting quality, since they practically know more about CITES than we do.

I also want to congratulate David Morgan, present at this meeting, on his appointment as CITES Scientific Co-ordinator. He is an old friend for many of us, not because of his age but because of the length of time we have known him. Thank you very much for being with us, although you will not be effectively joining the Secretariat until March. And Milena. What can I say to Milena? She has been appointed to serve on the Scientific Unit. I share with her not only a close friendship, but equally close collaboration over the past several years. I am excited and proud that one of the people trained on the Masters Course I direct, and who has worked closely with me in recent years, has attained such a relevant post at the CITES Secretariat.

I also wish to express my gratitude to the observer delegates from Parties, Intergovernmental and non-Governmental Organizations for their presence at this meeting. They all have my thanks in advance for their ever-valuable contributions to the meeting.

This Committee meeting, the last one before the CoP in Thailand, has quite a weighty agenda, given the large number of decisions the Conference has adopted and directed to the Plants Committee. As you all know, we are never afraid of work, and if it comes down to it, we will do as we have done at so very many meetings, working until late at night. Do you remember in Darwin with the Strategic Plan? Or in Leiden preparing the CoP? I know you are always willing. I remember once when there was a proposal to shorten this Committee's meetings by one day, John Donaldson sent me a concise, amusing e-mail. He said: "Margarita, the problem with cutting it one day short is that we'd have one less night to work!" In spite of the jokes, I know I can always count on all of you. And this has tremendous merit, given the voluntary nature of our role as representatives. As Mother Teresa of Calcutta said, "*The important thing is how much love we put into the work we do.*" However, the recurring problem of the lack of support for representatives must be reviewed at this meeting, because it could happen, and in fact it will happen, that such caring dedication is wasted for lack of a more than deserved recognition of our work as representatives.

There are many subjects of great importance, but I would like to draw your attention to some that this Committee had already prioritised at its last meeting: Significant Trade, the Review of resolutions and decisions on plants, and the mechanisms for the Review of the Appendices. Another highly important issue is finalizing the revision of the criteria. In this regard I must say I am deeply grateful to the nearly 40 reviewers from 14 Parties, who have voluntarily and unselfishly participated in the process of contrasting the criteria using certain taxonomic groups. Their work, compiled into a 181-page document I personally prepared, is the best proof of the interest of scientists and Parties in CITES issues. Their work makes ours enormously easier at this meeting; where we are also aided by the presence of the Chairman of the Animals Committee, Thomas Althaus, and the representative of Africa on the Animals Committee, so as not to lose sight of the problems surrounding animals. Thank you very much for being here, and I will return the visit in South Africa next month when this topic comes up in the Animals Committee.

Many thanks again to the Minister for sharing this opening with us. Let's start working!

Many thanks to all of you.