

Welcome Address

Sebby Kankondi, Managing Director of Namport

I am delighted that Namibia is afforded an opportunity to host the 4th Intermodal Africa 2006. We are happy to be associated with the promotion of transport in the region and in Africa and your participation and support for this event is appreciated. As Africans we need to seize opportunities as presents themselves to develop transport infrastructure. In doing so we will reduce the cost of doing business in Africa, subsequently enhancing our competitiveness. We need to take a deep interest in the future of transportation systems in Africa, so that we can create that future.

Honourable Minister and esteemed delegates; the Port of Walvis Bay as one of our mode of transport, has emerged from an ancient and archaic port into a modern one, during the past decade.

Our objective was to develop a long-term plan for the Namibian ports in terms of both port infrastructure and various port services. Today, the Port of Walvis Bay handles nearly 4 million tons of cargo annually, including over 77 000 containers for a small country like Namibia with its only 1.8 million people and limited hinterland. The port receives about 3000 vessels, including 450 Container vessels, with all vessels berthed within less than one hour of arrival time. The recent commissioned Container Terminal has already reached its cruising speed with average handling rates of 26 moves per gross crane hour.

But despite of all these major concrete improvements, we should not rest on our laurels. We have put our targets quite high, and we have an ambitious plan for further future enhancing the efficiency of our ports and transforming it into a major regional platform for trade, warehousing and distribution both for Namibia and beyond. To realise our goals, we are taking a number of concrete actions which are embodied in two important documents, namely; The Namibia Ports Authority Strategy Plan 2005 – 2008 and The Review and Updating of the Port Master Plan.

This three years strategy, spells out the principal actions required by the Namibian Ports Authority to establish itself as the market leader to transform the port into a regional economic centre; focusing on port and port-related activities and services.

It will also cater for economic, financial and culture/ leisure activities within the perimeter of the port area. On the whole, it will help to provide an excellent user friendly hub including a number of complementary activities and services.

The Strategy Plan will essentially be the principal agenda for the next three years and a platform for further transformation of Namibian Ports both in terms of port and waterfront development. It will guide us in achieving high productivity and performance, and more important in providing efficient and competitive services, and ensuring a safe and healthy working environment in the port sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

On national level, Namibia has recognized the importance of transport in accelerating economic growth, hence considerable investments in its infrastructure – roads, railways, harbours and airports. With this Namibia has a vast potential to become a transport hub for the entire region through the Trans-Kalahari and the Trans-Caprivi development corridors. This prospect arises in the fact that about half of Southern Africa's trade is Western-bound; 80% of the trade passes presently through the region's East coast. There is a great business opportunity to redirect a massive share of trade from the region to Europe and America through Walvis Bay.

However, in order to be competitive, the transport system needs to have an integrated approach, integrating the different modes of transport (road, rail, ship and plane). Moreover attention to maintenance, marketing, improving efficiency and maintaining the momentum already established in regional policy harmonization is essential for progress in this direction.

Again I wish you all a warm welcome to our country and I am looking forward to a rewarding two days.

I thank you.