



All hands on deck for a cleaner Namibia

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President Hage Geingob has proposed that the Workers' Day celebration in May be dedicated to a national clean-up campaign.

Geingob was quoted by state media as urging all Namibians, from civil servants to the general public, to joining a nationwide clean-up campaign in celebration of May Day.

Last year already the president had expressed his wish to launch a national clean-up campaign to help Namibia claim the title as the cleanest country in Africa, and for Windhoek to reclaim the title of cleanest African city.

At the time Geingob was quoted by Nampa as saying that he would like to set aside a day "when we will roll up our sleeves and engage in a nationwide clean-up campaign".

He said consultations were being held to select the most suitable date.

Speaking to members of the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW) and associated unions at State House yesterday, Geingob criticised the unhygienic state of many Namibian towns.

He urged all Namibians to support the clean-up campaign.

The main Workers' Day commemoration would be held at Khorixas this year, Geingob said.

The Namibia Chamber of Environment (NCE) immediately supported the president's suggestion.

To underline their support for the presidential initiative, the NCE announced that N\$50 000 would be distributed among ten local authorities to help them carry out the president's wishes.

Chris Brown, the NCE's CEO, said: "Keeping our environment clean is good for our countryside, our planet, our health and for setting an example to our children.

"For this reason, the NCE will be supporting the president's call by providing ten local authorities with an amount of up to N\$5 000 each to assist them to implement this clean-up campaign.

"Local authorities interested in applying should contact the NCE with a short proposal setting out their plan of action. We would also challenge the private sector to similarly support this initiative," Brown added.

The NCE emphasised that litter is a multi-faceted problem.

Key issues include the health risks posed by litter, not only to people but to livestock and wildlife too.

"Many cattle in Namibia die each year from eating plastic bags, which become impacted and block the digestive system," Brown said.



(<https://d3rp5jatom3eyn.cloudfront.net/assets/hands-on-deck-for-a-cleaner-namibia2018-03-130.jpg>)

FILTHY: Rubbish collecting in towns and rural areas poses a danger to people, livestock and the environment in general. PHOTO: NAMPA

Further, litter often contains toxic components which pollute the soil and water, posing health risks to humans, animals and plant life.

Discarded plastic containers and tins hold water and become breeding sites for mosquitoes. Other types of litter can physically harm people and animals.

Brown emphasised that plastic littering is increasingly threatening the world's oceans.

"Plastics are washed down rivers to the sea. The accumulation of plastic in the oceans of the world is so severe that, by 2050 if nothing is done, the mass (weight) of plastic will exceed that of the weight of all the fishes in the oceans."

Apart from the various risks, a dirty environment reflects "an uncaring attitude" and "a nation with little pride in their magnificent landscapes," Brown added.

Dreams of a cleaner country

Geingob's strong support for a clean-up campaign was first highlighted in October 2017, when he announced his plan to set aside a day for a national clean-up campaign in order to claim the title as Africa's cleanest country.

At the time he bemoaned the fact that Windhoek had slipped down the ranks as one of the cleanest African cities, a title previously bestowed on the city.

Windhoek now ranks as the tenth cleanest city in Africa, while South Africa's Cape Town ranks number one.

A firestorm of debate erupted recently after Namibian artist EES proposed a national clean-up campaign to be held on Independence Day.

President Geingob was quoted by media as saying that he did not disagree with the core message, but he disagreed with the proposed day.

Repeated attempts yesterday to obtain further comment from presidential spokesperson Alfredo Hengari failed.

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