



# Chief Executive Officer's Report to 3<sup>rd</sup> AGM

9<sup>th</sup> August 2019

## Background

At the end of June 2018, the Namibian Chamber of Environment (NCE) had existed as a functioning organisation for three years. It has one full-time employee (Henriette Kröhne-Fry), our Office Manager, and two part-time professional staff (Chris Brown – CEO and Dr Beat Weber – Director Socio-economic Development & Livelihoods). The NCE rents office space and sublets surplus offices. ExCo is looking at other office options that may include purchase, construction, partnership arrangements, and any other feasible ideas. The NCE has modest office equipment but no vehicles. The NCE keeps its overheads to a bare minimum so that funds can be released to support strategic projects and the work of its members. For this reason, the NCE does not implement any field-based initiatives, nor any project areas which fall under the mandate of any of its member organisations.

## Governance

The ultimate authority of the NCE resides in the Council – the members. Outside of Council meetings such as the AGM, an Executive Committee (ExCo) is responsible for providing strategic guidance and oversight to the NCE. The ExCo consists of the following eight members:

Charles Loots (Chairperson), Otjikoto Trust & private sector

Maxi Louis, NACSO

John Pallett, NEWS

Malan Lindeque, private Conservation Scientist)

Steve Galloway, private sector

Morgan Hauptfleisch, NUST

Stephan Bezuidenhout, ECC

Chris Brown, SST

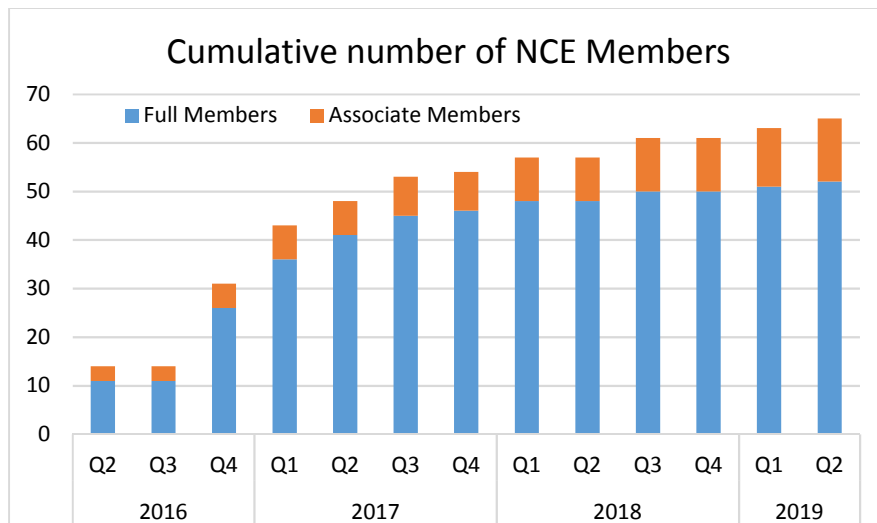
Since the 2<sup>nd</sup> AGM, ExCo has met three times to manage the business of the NCE, with an overall attendance of 71%.

## Strategic Programme Areas

The NCE implements its mandate and objectives by a programme of work that focuses on eight strategic programme areas, as follows:

### **1. Membership Support**

- Membership currently stands at 65 (58 at the last AGM), comprising 52 Full Members and 12 Associate Members. There are few environmental NGOs in Namibia that are not members.



- The NCE board room and facilities are used regularly by members for meetings and events – there is an open invitation to all members to use the NCE facilities also as a working base when in Windhoek.
- The Westair – NCE partnership to make available a Cessna 182 to its Members is working well. However, I have been surprised that it is not used more often – just ten times in the past two years. Please use the aircraft – the booking system is on the NCE website.
- We renewed our registration with the NCRST for 2019 on behalf of all Members – it took five months and comes with additional new bureaucracy. Our Office Manager has a good working relationship with NCRST and their response wrt specific research permits is relatively quick, given that permit applications are channelled to MET for their input.
- We circulate all EIA notices published in the media to all our members and partners. Not everyone wants these, but for some it is a very useful service. If you don't want to receive them, please let us know. Thanks to those who have responded to this request.

## **2. National Facilitation**

- The Best Practice Guide on environmental management in the mining sector, one of the outcomes from the Mining & Environment workshop held in 2017, was launched (in almost completed form) at the Mining Expo in May this year. The final version (both e- and hard copy) will be delivered to the Council of the Chamber of Mines at their annual Bosberaad in early September.
- Another output from this workshop was the establishment of a national Chamber of Mines “Sustainable Development Offsets Fund”. The first two projects supported were (i) electrification in the Mashu conservancy, with the Fund providing a 2:1 match with the conservancy, and (ii) setting up a revolving fund for affordable urban land ownership in Oshakati via a minimally serviced land delivery approach. A video is under development to document and disseminate information on this approach.

- A Best Practice Guide on hunting is in second draft, in collaboration with NAPHA, other NCE Members and MET.
- Discussions are underway with FENATA to develop a Best Practice Guide on Tourism. The idea is to incorporate a strategic spatial planning exercise as part of the process. This is in response to the realisation that some parts of Namibia are suffering from “over-tourism” and that we need to find and develop new tourism destinations to better distribute and grow the product.
- The reward scheme for information on capture, trade and trafficking in pangolins and their parts has resulted in the arrest of over 200 people and confiscation of about 60 live pangolins.
- The Red Data Book on carnivores is in an advanced stage and will be finalised before the end of this year. Draft species accounts are available for review.
- The NCE has recently joined an African National Red List Alliance to explore developing national Red Lists for those species with sufficient data – other mammals, reptiles – with an emphasis on endemic and near endemic species and commercialised / trafficked species.
- In February the NCE hosted a small “Thought-leaders” meeting addressing CBNRM in southern Africa, sustainable use and community rights. Most southern African CBNRM programmes were represented, as well as specialists from four continents on sustainable use. A contact group was established that collaborates to counter Eurocentric thinking about wildlife conservation.
- Invasive alien cacti are posing a serious environmental and land production threat in parts of Namibia and spreading rapidly. We have supported manual control in Windhoek, but this will not contain the situation, as all species have escaped to surrounding municipal and farm land. NCE has worked with a number of NCE partners to develop a biocontrol programme for three cactus species. This involved an EIA Scoping report with public consultation to obtain an Environmental Clearance Certificate and then an importation authorisation. The first biocontrol agents will be arriving from Rhodes University on 21 August.
- The NCE continued to provide input to the Protected areas and wildlife management Bill.
- The NCE served on three Advisory bodies to MET – the Sustainable Development Advisory Council (SDAC), the Solid Waste Advisory Panel and the Nature Conservation Board. My term of office on the SDAC ended at the end of 2018 and I decided not to stand again – NCE Members were invited to nominate people and one Member was suggested to the Minister. I understand that the new Council has not yet been announced.

### **3. Advocacy**

- The NCE has continued to engage on the issue of plastics as increasingly worrying information comes out on their impacts on the environment, climate change and human health. The plastics industry is behaving in similar fashion to the tobacco industry in past decades – distraction tactics around recycling and even legal threats. New legislation to address part of the problem in Namibia is at an advanced stage, and the Minister of MET has announced that single use plastic will be banned by 2022.
- We believe that the illegal exploitation of timber in Namibia has been brought to a halt, at least for the time being. Escalating pressure on MAWF culminated in an article on the

front page of the Namibia with me quoted (correctly) as saying the Minister of MAWF had been “useless” in addressing the forestry problems. Two years of trying to engage with senior officials were swept aside and that morning I had an audience with the Minister, Executive Director and Director of Forestry. However, the conversation was not about the forestry and timber crisis, but about bruised egos. A successful Parliamentary hearing on the timber situation took place in July 2019, and the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Natural Resources are currently on a fact-finding mission in north-east Namibia.

- The feral horse / hyaena debacle was a low point in wildlife conservation in Namibia. The MET made a wrong decision to kill the hyaenas, as a result of a small group of people working up public opinion by overstating the value of the horses to tourism and by insinuating simplistic binary options of horses versus hyaenas. The NCE engaged on a number of platforms and I do not believe that hyaenas will be killed by MET again. I am less sure about the neighbouring landowners.
- The recent Economic Summit held in Windhoek offers us a window to explore constraints within our sector to economic growth. One area that has been of concern for some time is the time it takes for Environmental Clearance Certificates to be issued. The standard turn-around time should be in the order of 3 weeks, not the 4-5 months and longer that it currently often takes. We will be following up and this and other invalid environmental “constraints” that limit economic growth.

#### **4. Environmental Policy Research**

- The term “environment” has different meaning to different people. We think of it as the interrelationship of ecological, social and economic / livelihoods aspects – perhaps more in line with the concept of sustainable development. Many of the NCE supporters, both corporates and donors think of “environment” as ecology and the green environment. After careful consideration, ExCo decided that we should address this by formally opening a component of work in the socio-economic and livelihoods sector that runs seamlessly with NCE’s ongoing work. We have an arrangement, on a one-year test basis, with Development Workshop Namibia, for the part-time services of Dr Beat Weber to head up this sector. The first stage was a rapid assessment of the socio-economic NGO sector, followed by a prioritisation of our focus, building on ongoing work. The priorities are (i) access to affordable titled urban land, (ii) appropriate and affordable sanitation, (iii) energy – both in urban and rural areas, and (iv) research on the economics of poverty. More recently, the concept of drought support is being explored because of the current crisis. Because of the current priorities in all these areas, the levels of national importance and the size of the challenges, there is little room for other topics.

#### **5. Environmental Information**

- The role of the Environmental Information Service (EIS), in terms of number of users and content, continues to grow.
- The Namibian Journal of Environment is in its third year, with Dr John Irish as our very competent and committed new Hon Editor, having taken over from Barbara Curtis.

- An NCE “annual” report – covering the first three years of the NCE – is completed and being finally checked before going to press.
- The 2019 “Conservation and the Environment” magazine is done – thanks to an excellent partnership with Venture Media, Felines Communication and Conservation Consultants (Gail Potgieter) and the other NCE Members who contributed articles. We would like this to be an annual production, so please think about your articles for 2020.
- The NCE had been lethargic in the social media space, because it is foreign territory to me. It also seems to be foreign territory to many of our Members and partners, including MET. As a result, subversive forces entered the vacuum that we left. In 2019 we decided to start occupying that space more effectively and to counter the “fake news and opinions” being peddled by a few conspiracy theorists and agenda-driven individuals whom we suspect of being in the pay of the anti-sustainable use lobby (which is essentially largely a business model for self-aggrandisement and income generation). We employed Gail Potgieter to run our Facebook to great effect. We need to go further. We plan to bring key people in the sector together to build a strategic alliance, including NACSO, WWF, MET and any others who wish to be part of a better coordinated approach.

#### **6. *Young Namibian Training and Mentorship***

- Over the past two academic years we have provided 36 environmental bursaries (23 in 2019) at the Hons and MSc levels and 16 internships. About 1/3 study at UNAM, 1/3 at NUST and 1/3 at universities in South Africa.
- Because of the importance of this initiative, we have set up an independent “Training and Bursary Trust Fund of Namibia” with independent trustees, which has just recently been certified by the Master of the High Court of Namibia. We hope to grow this Fund to be able to provide 30 and more bursaries in the environment sector each year.

#### **7. *Fund raising***

- The core running costs of the NCE are currently being covered by B2Gold Namibia to the amount of N\$1 million per year. In the 2016/17 financial year the cost of running the NCE, excluding salaries, was N\$790,462. In the 2017/18 financial year the costs were down to N\$613,329. In the past financial year, the costs were N\$803,700.
- Project funding raised in 2016/17 was N\$2.7 million, in 2017/18 was N\$4.0 million and the amount raised for the 2018/19 financial year was N\$6.1 million.
- B2Gold Namibia continues to provide valuable assistance with fund raising amongst corporates. This is proving to be very effective, and we anticipate that corporate support for the sector could grow to about N\$8 million per year in the next two years.
- The catalytic nature of NCE funding also helps leverage additional funding from corporates, bilateral and multi-lateral donors which do not necessarily come through the NCE but go directly to our members. We estimate that an additional amount of some N\$3 million were leveraged in this way in the past financial year from RMB/FNB Foundation, GiZ, UNDP and UNICEF.

#### **8. *Grants Making***

- A “Grantee Reports” section has been added to the NCE website, where progress reports, final reports and media releases on the work are posted.
- Most projects do not run within the NCE financial year, and typically run over two or three years or more. To date some 25 projects have been supported, many still ongoing.

## Conclusion

The mini workshop that we hold with each AGM plays an important role in helping us set an annual agenda based on Member’s priorities. That is why there is considerable overlap between this annual report and the feedback on progress from the last mini workshop.

After the appointment of the new Executive Director (PS) in MET, Mr Teo Nghitila, I was invited to an informal discussion with him about priorities, mutual support and related matters. I invited the MET to nominate a representative at senior level to serve on the NCE ExCo.

I wish to thank all our very supportive ExCo members for the time they invest in ensuring that our governance meets the highest standards, in providing guidance and ideas, and creating contacts and linking us to their networks. Charles Loots is with us every week, sometimes more, to bounce ideas and discuss strategies. Henriette is at the heart of the NCE and involved with all components. Without her we would be but a shadow of our current form. And finally, to all our sponsors – particularly our anchor sponsor, B2Gold Namibia, and Mark Dawe and Charles Loots, for their enthusiasm, vision and no-strings-attached commitment to the NCE. We seem to be making progress and addressing some of the key challenges of the day with some success. It is a team effort. The team comprises all NCE members and us, your Secretariat, and our range of partners. Because of that we are in a strong position.

Thank you.

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