



STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR SAM NUJOMA, FOUNDING
PRESIDENT AND FATHER OF THE NAMIBIAN NATION, ON THE
OCCASION OF THE MEETING WITH HON. CDE. SOPHIA
SHANINGWA, SECRETARY GENERAL OF SWAPO PARTY AND
PROFESSOR KENNETH MATENGU, UNAM VICE CHANCELLOR, ON
THE IDEA OF THE SEAWATER DESALINATION PILOT PLANT

18 JUNE 2019

THE UNAM SAM NUJOMA CAMP

AT HENTIES BAY

ERONGO REGION

*Check Against Delivery

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Honourable Comrade Sophia Shaningwa, Secretary General of SWAPO Party;

Professor Kenneth Matengu, Vice Chancellor of the University of Namibia;

Distinguished Professors and Staff of the University of Namibia;

Distinguished Invited Guests:

I am honoured to be back again at the UNAM Sam Nujoma Campus here in Henties Bay where I recently officially launched the Seawater Desalination Research Pilot Plant, a joint initiative of the University of Namibia and the University of Turku, Finland.

This plant is unique in Namibia because it is operated fully by solar power and it clearly demonstrates that Namibia can utilize its unlimited seawater resources and tap from its abundant solar energy to guarantee the supply of clean water to its entire population and convert parts of our desert into a garden that will be populated with evergreen trees.

Once again, allow me to thank Professor Kenneth Matengu, Vice Chancellor of the University of Namibia, and indeed Professor Lazarus Hangula, Former Vice Chancellor of the University of Namibia and the entire UNAM's Team for their joint efforts in facilitating what promises to be a long-term solution to portable water needs in the country.

The question of seawater desalination has been at the forefront of my thoughts for many years. Indeed, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) water scarcity affects more than 40 per cent of people around the world. This is an alarming figure that is projected to increase with the rise of global temperatures as a result of climate change.

Ensuring universal access to safe and affordable drinking water for all by 2030 is therefore a must and requires we invest in adequate infrastructure now. Our Water supply is diminishing year after year due to the adverse effects of climate change already felt in our country.

In addition, as you know, about 80% of Namibia relies on groundwater as a major water source. But due to Climate Change, our country could experience prolonged years of drought in the future that could deplete all our groundwater and surface water resources.

Should Climate Change affect the whole of Southern Africa, major rivers like the Kunene, Kavango and Zambezi could also dry up. Such a situation would lead to untold suffering for our people. Yet Namibia is blessed with about 1500 km of coastline along the Atlantic Ocean that provides us with unlimited water resource.

Surely, the need of additional or alternative water resources as well as the inevitable looming prolonged drought due to global warming has been a notable concern as far back as 1998. This is when the Namibia Water Corporation (NAMWATER), the state-owned national water management and Distribution Company, first looked into the prospects of desalination but the project never got off the ground.

NAMWATER looked into setting up a desalination plant again around the year 2009 which also did not get off the ground until a privately-owned desalination plant was developed by Orano Resources (formerly Areva Namibia) with an annual production of 24 million cubic meters of which 12 million cubic meters is supplied to NAMWATER for further resell and distribution to the mines in Erongo Region.

As much as this amount could be seen as an additional source to the drying up Omdel and Kuiseb Aquifers, it is not enough to cater to the ever growing coastal population as well as industries like fishing and mining which need a high-water usage in their daily operations.

That, coupled with the increasingly inadequate rainfalls for the past years, which is a pattern predicted to continue into the future, has thus rendered the idea of a seawater desalination plant not only an additional source of water but a must. Therefore, the time is now to abstract seawater and to desalinate it for human consumption.

I have already seen the report on the pre-feasibility study from the University of Namibia called *“Large-Scale Seawater Desalination in Namibia: Perspectives for Integration with Renewable Energy”* which proposes the implementation of large-scale seawater desalination using renewable energy based on Solar Photovoltaic, Concentrated Solar Power and Wind Energy.

The report shows that a desalination plant located between Swakopmund and Henties Bay and producing about 40 million cubic meters of potable water per year could supply the whole of the Central Area Network of Namibia, including the City of Windhoek. Of course the water will have to be pumped to a total elevation of about 1700 meters above the sea level. Hence the proposal to use affordable solar and wind energy to drive the desalination plant and the booster pumps.

We have already witnessed the launch of a Solar Powered Desalination Pilot Plant here in at the UNAM Sam Nujoma Campus that proves to all of us that what I am requesting is possible from a technological point of view.

What is needed now is a detailed feasibility study for the acquisition of a large-scale desalination plant and the design of suitable infrastructure to transport the clean water inland as far as Windhoek and beyond.

Since water supply is a national issue, additional seawater desalination plants would have to be installed around Luderitz to supply the Southern parts of Namibia and along the Northern Skeleton Coast at Mowe Bay near the Kunene River to supply water to the Kunene Region and the Northern regions of Namibia.

At this juncture, allow me once again to congratulate the Vice Chancellor of the University of Namibia, Professor Kenneth Matengu and his team for setting a good example for the rest of Namibia to imitate as far as water supply and water security are concerned. The time has now come for us as a nation, to put these ideas into practice.

I would therefore like to ask the Government of the Republic of Namibia to adopt Seawater Desalination using Renewable Energy as the principal source of bulk water supply in Namibia in the medium to long term time frames. Similarly, I appeal to the Government of Namibia, through the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, and in the presence of Honourable Comrade Sophia Shaningwa, the Secretary General of SWAPO Party, to consider implementation of large-scale Seawater Desalination as a priority national project.

It is my hope that the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry and Namibia Water Corporation will study the UNAM's pre-feasibility report and come up with a plan of action for government's approval and immediate implementation.

I thank you.