

NAMIBIA

One of Africa's most stable countries is ramping up its drive to attract investors in exciting, tech-led fields like hydrogen manufacturing

Combining a wealth of natural resources with political, economic and civil stability, Namibia is embracing economic diversification and is determined to fly the continental flag for zero-carbon renewables projects by fulfilling its ambition to become a global hub for green hydrogen.

Blessed with huge mineral deposits that include diamonds, gold, lithium and tin, precious metals have fueled impressive socioeconomic development and countless infrastructure projects for several decades. Meanwhile, significant reserves of oil and gas, which are being discovered and explored with the help of international partners, are putting the country of just 2.5 million people on the global energy map.

Namibia's progress has moved in quantum leaps over the past few decades. Built on agriculture, fishing and the aforementioned prolific mining portfolio, the country boasts one of the most promising economies in Africa. Meanwhile, its favorable geographical position and vast coastline have made it a springboard for trade with its land-locked neighbors.

As the world pursues net-zero, Namibia's onshore and offshore minerals — considered key commodities of the future — have roused international interests. Additionally, the Namibian government, headed by President Hage Geingob, is championing the "Blue Economy" and developing policies to protect its resources.

The nation is ranked 9th and 11th in Africa on the World Economic Forum's Competitiveness Index and World Bank's Ease of Doing Business, respectively. The welcoming country is also rated 6th in Sub-Saharan Africa on the Economic Freedom Index. The goal of economic progress sits at the heart of the government's fiscal strategies, with ministers implementing economic and structural reforms to improve the republic's business climate, upskill its workforce and reduce inequality and unemployment.

Strong bilateral relations with the US date back to the early days of independence in early 1990. As well as being one of the country's largest mining investors, the US is also cultivating the relationship with its smaller partner through initiatives like Prosper Africa. That government program connects US and African businesses with new buyers, suppliers and investment opportunities in a range of sectors.

"We are open for business and already have existing business relationships with the US and US companies," says Minister of Finance and Public Enterprises, Ipumbu Shiimi. "We want to see more US companies investing in Namibia, particularly as there are many opportunities in the green energy area. We have been friends



Through the development of new oil and gas reserves and zero-carbon hydrogen projects, Namibia is making its mark on the world stage.



Hage Geingob
President

for many years and are keen to continue to build on this strong and successful relationship.

"Green hydrogen is a new industry that we are trying to create, so it's also a potential area where we can collaborate with our partners in the US and attract investments from the US. We will have cheap and clean energy as it's going to be green. Therefore, if you want to produce anything with clean energy, you must come to Namibia. There are many areas opening up where we can collaborate together with the US government and American enterprises."

Economic transformation and innovation
Namibia's vast desert landscape and abundance of solar and wind have placed green hydrogen production as a promising pillar of its future economy. At the same time, it is continuing to optimize investment and returns on traditional fiscal segments like mining and oil, with much of this success achieved with the help of highly respected and experienced overseas partners.

One such example of this positive collabora-

tion was seen earlier this year, when Shell, QatarEnergy and the National Petroleum Corporation of Namibia (NAMCOR) made a potentially lucrative deep-water discovery. The trio drilled an exploration well that established the presence of a reservoir with light oil.

Further appraisal activities with dynamic data gathering are required to characterize the variability of rock properties and to determine the size and recoverable potential of the discovery, Shell revealed, cautioning it frequently takes many years to reach first production of commercial hydrocarbons.

Last year, Shell and its partners made two discoveries in the same basin, known as the Orange Basin. Around the same time and in a similar area of the offshore area, TotalEnergies made a "significant discovery of light oil with associated gas". Work is now underway to determine the commerciality of that discovery.

This upstream success has prompted talk that Namibia may consider joining the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) if the discoveries turn out to be sufficiently large for commercial development. Namibia's economy could double to \$22 billion by 2040 from the riches of "black gold" thanks to the potentially significant offshore oil discover. Indeed, officials who are hopeful that this exciting development could change Namibia's economic landscape do not need to look far to see what that might mean, as Namibia sits next to OPEC member Angola.

"People talk about billions of barrels, but that is yet to be established; all that we know is they are a commercial discovery," says Minister of Mines and Energy, Tom Alweendo. "We need to monetize these discoveries as soon as possible and, if all goes to plan, in four to five years' time we should be able to produce the first oil. It does take some time, of course. Normally it can take up to seven or eight years, but we can expedite the process to produce oil as soon as possible."

The minister understands that people may see a contradiction in Namibia encouraging massive investment in renewables, while at the same time wanting to promote fossil fuels. However, he is adamant this is not the case, arguing it is far easier to secure substantial investment for the exploitation of oil and gas resources than it is for renewables.

IPUMBU SHIIMI, MINISTER OF FINANCE AND PUBLIC ENTERPRISES

"If you want to produce anything with clean energy, you must come to Namibia. We can collaborate with the US government and American enterprises."

"With the Paris Agreement — a legally binding international treaty on climate change — the world's richest countries have promised that they are going to make \$100 billion available for people to invest in renewables, but that money is never available. If you ask, nobody knows where to get that money. It cannot be correct to say, if I find another resource like oil that can be exploited and monetized, that I shouldn't do that. Therefore, it's not a contradiction.

"Our view is that Africa, as a continent, contributes less than 4% to the carbon emissions causing climate change. You cannot put so much pressure on us as if we were the biggest polluter as we are not. The largest polluters are the industrialized nations. Therefore, we don't see a contradiction in embracing both traditional fossil fuels as well as renewables. We believe that exploiting and monetizing our fossil fuels can help us improve, or move faster on investing in renewables."

Renewables to power economic revolution

In the global race to net-zero, Namibia has key advantages over rivals, with its extensive solar and wind resources ideal for green hydrogen

The success of Namibia's economic revival in the post-pandemic era was clearly underlined by the significant boost in foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows that totaled almost \$720 million, equivalent to around 7% of Gross Domestic Product, during the first nine months of 2022.

In his mid-March State of the Nation Address, President Geingob noted that the bulk of that FDI came from equity injections for exploration activities following recent offshore oil discoveries. "This surge in FDI marks the highest year-on-year growth since 2015, indicating growing investor confidence in Namibia's economy," he said without providing comparative figures for previous periods. "These green shoots of economic recovery are undeniable and show that the country is moving towards a positive growth trajectory."

According to the latest predictions by Namibia's economic experts, these positive FDI inflows are likely to continue for the foreseeable future as international investors take note of the offshore oil discoveries and the commencement of the green hydrogen project feasibility study.

In his address, President Geingob also confirmed that his government plans to expedite the implementation of innovative supply-side policies to encourage more economic activities and facilitate the ease of doing business. In addition, despite the focus on the energy industry, there is still a need to foster broadly-based economic

growth across all sectors of the economy.

As such, the central bank has embarked on the development of the long-awaited Financial Sector Transformation Strategy that officials hope will act as a catalyst to increased levels of financial inclusion, especially in rural and less urban areas of the republic.

"We're pleased that the COVID-19 situation has stabilized and our economy is recovering well," says Minister Shiimi. "Commodity prices have also recovered, meaning we are reaping

IPUMBU SHIIMI, MINISTER OF FINANCE AND PUBLIC ENTERPRISES
"We are stepping up our efforts to invest heavily in renewable energy. We also want to produce hydrogen."

the benefits of better returns. We're also happy with the new prospects of oil, although we will probably only start to see the benefits of them at the end of the current decade."

Turning his attention to the economic diversification drive that is now well underway, the minister is excited about the creation of new industries that will boost employment, investment, exports and trade for years to come. "We are stepping up our efforts to invest heavily in



Namibia is determined to drive the global energy transition by becoming a hydrogen hub.

renewable energy, in solar, but we also want to produce hydrogen and hydrogen products such as ammonia.

"That's also the industry that we are trying to nurture at the moment, because Namibia has significant wind and solar resources, so we can export this zero-carbon product to the rest of the world through hydrogen. We can have many other industries that are linked to hydrogen in Namibia. That's something that we are pursuing very aggressively as we launched our hydrogen strategy in Egypt at COP27.

"We advertised a bid last August and are now busy negotiating with a company that won the bid to start with a feasibility study for green hydrogen. But that's only the first one; this is going to be a massive industry in the future that could change Namibia dramatically."

Determined diversification drive launched

The senior official is confident Namibia has many competitive advantages as it strives to diversify its economy because the country will not be reliant on only a few commodities. "We have learned the lessons of the past: which is that when commodity prices fall, the whole economy is negatively affected," he says.

"We're looking in agriculture where we can increase production and expand. We're a

date producer: can we expand those activities? Where are the constraints? We have activities running in those industries to see how we remove the constraints so that we can grow them. We've identified half a dozen industries that we can help to diversify."

These efforts are being spearheaded by the Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board (NIPDB), which is tasked with attracting FDI and pushing investment openings in front of leading investors via a targeted, proactive strategy. "Instead of just saying, come to Namibia and talk to everybody, the NIPDB says this is what we have established and they determine who the investors are in these specific industries," Minister Shiimi explains.

"They go to specific investors. It's not a general investment promotion strategy, but it is a targeted one. In the past, it was quite general; we invited everybody. Now we're saying: this is what we have identified as an industry that has got potential, why are you not coming to Namibia? That also becomes a conversation.

"They would say the reason why I'm not coming to Namibia is because of this constraint. We then say we are going to remove the constraint. That's the innovative approach through which we want to diversify the economy to benefit our country and our people."



Investment landscape in excellent health

Namibia is a potent blend of warm people, rich traditions and many exciting investment opportunities in a range of economic sectors, factors the government is keen to build upon

Given its commitment to net-zero and the development of fossil fuels, the republic is taking large strides towards its investment goals, as Minister Shiimi (MS) discusses.

Namibia's economy is steadily recovering from the impact of the pandemic, what steps are you taking to mitigate the effects of global inflationary pressure and weaker non-oil commodity prices?

MS: We're happy that the economy is starting to recover as over the last few years we have experienced difficulties. First, when commodity prices started to fall, then we also had drought, and then COVID-19 came. That really made the economic situation very difficult for us.

As a commodity producer, we are reaping the benefits of better prices and that is helping us recover monies lost during those difficult years. We're also happy with the new oil prospects, but will probably only start to see the benefits of them at the end of this decade.



Ipumbu Shiimi
Minister of Finance and Public Enterprises

That's something that we are pursuing very aggressively. This is going to be a big industry that could change Namibia dramatically. At the same time, we're looking at other sectors where we have competitive advantages, like agriculture where we can increase production and expand. We are a date producer: can we expand those activities and where are the constraints? We meet with the private sector on a regular basis to try and identify such constraints.

The government is implementing economic and structural reforms to improve the business climate, upscale the workforce, and reduce inequality and unemployment. What are some of the key ministerial priorities to strengthen the private sector and address imbalances to boost economic productivity?

MS: When we talk about diversifying the economy, we are really trying to create quality jobs that improve incomes. When income levels rise, you reduce poverty and inequalities. This whole strategy is about employment, poverty reduction and inequality eradication.

IPUMBU SHIIMI, MINISTER OF FINANCE AND PUBLIC ENTERPRISES

"Everything that we do promotes investment with a view to making sure there is inclusive growth for Namibia."

We're also looking at diversifying the economy in different ways. Firstly, we're looking at establishing new industries by stepping up our efforts to invest heavily in renewables. We also want to produce hydrogen and related products like ammonia. That's the industry that we are trying to mature right now as Namibia has significant wind and solar resources. We can export that clean hydrogen to the world and attract many other industries linked to hydrogen.

NIPDB shapes successful business climate

While steadily positioning itself as one of the most exciting and promising African economies, Namibia is well aware it needs to adopt a proactive and structured approach to enticing leading international investors, particularly in emerging sectors like green hydrogen.

With that challenging goal in mind, a little over two years ago, the government established a dedicated entity to attract and encourage FDI: the NIPDB. The investment board is committed to creating a conducive business environment in which investors can thrive. Key responsibilities include the development of new investment strategies, creation of a seamless investor experience and exploration of synergies with the public and private sector.

The NIPDB facilitates a streamlined business climate by operating a well-equipped one-stop-center that connects investors to all the key business agencies, while ensuring compliance to the relevant policies and other legal requirements. In short, the board eliminates red tape and bottlenecks to ease the entry of investors into Namibia so they can subsequently establish their enterprises.

"Inclusive growth is what we want to drive, working towards reducing unemployment," explains NIPDB CEO, Nangula Uaandja. "Our national development plans have always had three priorities from the government point of view: fighting unemployment, fighting poverty and inequalities. Everything that we do promotes investment with a view to making sure there is inclusive growth for Namibia."

"When investors talk about competitiveness and ease of doing business, there are other African countries that are performing stronger. My message to investors is that this is old news; there is a new Namibia. President Geingob is determined to make his nation a preferred investment destination. That determination was not only articulated; he has made specific ac-



Nangula Uaandja
CEO, NIPDB

tions through various appointments of skilled people that have been working in the public sector for many years, and that he has put in very specific positions. He has also brought people from the private sector to come and collaborate with those in the public sector."

This rare blend of experience and knowledge from the public and private sector has created a potent mix of talent that is working on several new investment and business focused policies that will encourage and protect foreign investors, as well as provide much-needed support to domestic investors too, Uaandja adds.

"We are seeing great collaboration between



Hydrogen produced in Namibia will be used to power motor vehicles around the world.

How are we doing it? We have established productivity task forces for specific industries. The government is not simply introducing new legislation, but actually sitting down with a specific private sector group and talking about what obstacles need to be removed for them to expand — if they're already present in Namibia.

For those that are not already active here, you go to them and say why are you not coming to Namibia? They will tell you the reasons why and, again, you work on eliminating those obstacles. That way, you encourage more private sector activity, more private sector expansion, and so you create more jobs. That's the approach we are following.

What are some key areas available for deeper cooperation between Namibia and the US, particularly in the emerging green economy and tech industries?

MS: One of the areas where we are already collaborating with the US is clean energy. They are helping to finance a feasibility study for a solar plant that will support the whole region, not just Namibia, but Botswana and South Africa.

Green hydrogen is a new industry and a potential area of collaboration. We want to attract investments and establish renewables-based downstream industries. We are going to have cheap energy and we're going to have clean energy, because it's going to be green.

If you want to produce anything with clean energy, you must come to Namibia. If a US company wants to set up its data center here, we will have cheap and clean energy, so they can do so easily. There are many areas that are opening up where we can collaborate together with the US government and US companies.

What is your final message to any of the readers of USA Today who might be interested in investing in Namibia?

The first point I want to make is that we are open for business. The second point is that we already have existing business relationships with the US and US companies and want to see more US enterprises here as there are many opportunities in the green energy area. Not only that, but then there are many other opportunities that can be explored.

age the best that we can get from our various trade agreements.

"We created those general awareness campaigns as we discovered not too many investors know about Namibia. Of course, investors that want us, can always find us. But there are other investors for us to now start value addition, there are investors that we want, investors that we need, and we want them to be aware of Namibia. That's why the investment and export promotion attaché has come in: we want them to be targeted specifically.

"Countries like the US are the largest source of FDI, but we are not getting our fair share of that huge pot, and we need to find out why. That's why the US is one of our targeted markets. There is a lot of FDI from the US flowing everywhere, but Namibia is not getting a sufficient share and we need to understand why.

"Is it because they don't know us? Is it because we don't appeal to them? Is it because they know us but they know us for things and not for others? As the largest source of FDI, the US is our target market and we have now got an attaché there."

Global reach aims to inspire investments

Apart from the US, the NIPDB is focusing on catching the eye of investors on several continents, rather than putting all its eggs in one geographical basket, as underlined by its new network of trade attachés.

The leader is convinced this strategy will pay rich dividends and allow officials to cherry pick the best investor for the best opening. "Some of our best targets will be Germany, the UK and Spain," Uaandja notes. "We believe that we can target good investment from Spain in terms of agriculture, Germany in terms of technology and green energy, and financial services from the UK. These are some of the targets that we see and that's where we then focus one of our attachés to take the next step.

NANGULA UAANDJA CEO, NIPDB

"Everything that we do is promoting investment with a view to making sure there is inclusive growth for Namibia."

"Of course, there are also other markets, such as Canada and Australia that are both good sources of investment in terms of mining. Currently, we do not have missions there so have a bit of a challenge in terms of putting somebody there on a full time basis. Hence when I visited Canada I spoke to some of our mining investors to see if we can attract new ones."

"The Namibian government is certainly investing a significant amount of time, money and effort into ensuring it optimizes its investment pull and creates new partnerships that open new doors. To this end, officials have teamed up with the famous Harvard Growth Lab to facilitate collaboration with policymakers to design actions and share insights through teaching, tools and publications, in the pursuit of inclusive prosperity.

"They told us if we want economic growth, we need to come up with a new formula of development," Uaandja says. "Their experts told us to diversify our economy and that we've already got nearly 100 types of exports that have real scale-up potential. We are using that valuable information to set our priorities as we move forward and advance our economy."

Banking sector is catalyst for sustainable growth

Boasting impressive living standards that are already among the highest found anywhere on the vast continent, Namibia is proud to be an upper-middle income country, albeit one with ambitions to become a high-income industrialized country by the end of the current decade.

Competitive advantages include a relatively young and well educated workforce. Considering the size of its population, the republic is also well served by public and private universities, while numerous vocational training institutions are scattered across its urban areas. The national education system is also geared towards adapting to the needs of emerging industries, to develop a competent, trained workforce.

Logistics are another strong point, with a well maintained, integrated and globally competitive network of road, air, port, railway, power, postal and telecommunication infrastructure. Ports serve as a point of entry for landlocked countries. Namibia currently has several regional integration and bilateral trade agreements that give it preferential access to billions of consumers. The pacts include the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Southern African Customs Union.

Supporting and facilitating trade and commerce with global businesses is a well-regulated and efficient banking sector that adheres to the strictest international best practice and anti-money laundering legislation. Overseen by the Bank of Namibia (BON), the industry features nine authorized banking institutions, comprising seven commercial banking institutions, a branch of a foreign banking institution, and a representative office. Together, they are the primary mobilizers of funds for the public and the main source of financing for business operations and economic activities in Namibia, notes BON Governor, Johannes !Gawaxab.

Addressing a high-profile audience at the central bank's last annual symposium, !Gawaxab talked about how through appropriate management and allocation of oil, gas, and green hydrogen revenues, the country can promote economic diversification and build a base for higher and stable growth.

"The critical challenge for us is to harness the oil, gas, and green hydrogen resources by making the right strategic choices and synchronizing their implementation in a context that improves the lives of the poor through increased investment in health, education, physical infrastructure, and other non-oil sectors," he said at the November event.

"However, this will only be possible if the government approaches the oil and gas sector and the green hydrogen initiatives in a nation-

Namibia's banking and financial services sector is helping to ensure the lucrative portfolio of resources is being developed for a dynamic, vibrant and prosperous economy



Namibia's banking and financial services sector benefits from a robust regulatory regime.

**THINUS PRINSLOO
MD, CAPRICORN GROUP**
"The group's strong performance [in 2022] is due to a better operating environment with dedicated and committed staff."

al, rational, and strategic manner. We are fully aware that these sectors cannot only bring significant financial resources and enormous transformational opportunities but also come with challenges. There are many examples around the world where developing countries have obtained windfalls from oil and gas but eventually ended up poorer than before. We must avoid the resource curse at all costs. We must learn from the experiences of others."

Sovereign wealth fund guards future riches

One of the topics that !Gawaxab speech touched on was the successful launch earlier in the year of Namibia's own Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF). Described by the banking expert as a "historic milestone for the people of Namibia and its future generations", the SWF is managed by the BON under the auspices of the Ministry of Finance and is officially known as the Welwitschia Fund.

The special fund takes its name from the Welwitschia mirabilis, an enduring and

all-weather ever-green plant endemic to Namibia, signifying the resilience and long-term sustainable growth of the fund. "The creation of the Welwitschia Fund will, without doubt, strengthen Namibia's fiscal stability and resilience to the external shocks that stem from Namibia's interconnectedness with the global economy," !Gawaxab explained.

"It will facilitate the wealth transfer sourced from Namibia's abundant natural resources so generations to come also benefit even long after the current resource base is depleted.

Diversified banking strategy creates rich rewards for Capricorn

The award-winning bank's strong capital, solid liquidity position and great resilience make it stand out from the crowd

As a proud Namibian banking giant, Capricorn Group is well-positioned to take advantage and help fill the many commercial and investment spaces opening up across the economy, as Thinus Prinsloo (TP), managing director, details.

Namibia has grown into a higher-middle-income country with strong industrial, agriculture, mining and tourism industries, and a financial services sector with decent liquidity. With Capricorn having high exposure to the markets via Bank Windhoek and your asset management subsidiaries, what are your expectations for 2023?

TP: I'm fairly bullish about the next few years as a lot of exciting things are happening in the economy, especially with the energy boom. We are highly dependent on agriculture and have also come through a drought. The third big driver is tourism and that is also starting to pick up post COVID-19. There are a number of factors that we see for positive growth in 2023.

The one sector that is perhaps underestimated to some extent is manufacturing, that is really starting to rehabilitate as one of the bigger players in the economy. That success, combined with the energy sector, should give us a better than expected economic uplift this year.

Established in 1996 and listed on the Stock Exchange in 2013, Capricorn has grown into a true Namibian success story employing over 1,600 people. Could you share with us more about Capricorn's growth journey in recent years and what your strategic focus areas are on the medium-term?

TP: Capricorn basically developed out of Bank Windhoek, which was founded in 1982. Through the years, we've developed other subsidiaries. That's probably core to our philosophy as we're much more entrepreneurial and dedicated to developing something and building it, rather than simply embarking on acquisitions.

We've got subsidiaries active in the financial services sector, including Bank Windhoek, Capricorn Asset Management — the largest independent asset manager in the country. Bank Windhoek is either number one or two, depending on which line item you measure them. Then, Entrepo Holdings, which is a term lender in the market, which has a 25% market share.

"We branched out into Botswana in 2006 by acquiring a micro lender and converting it into a bank: Bank Gaborone. We've got another term lender there, Peo Finance, as part of the growth strategy. We were in Zambia as well for a while but left during the pandemic as the market was just not living up to expectations.



Thinus Prinsloo
Managing Director, Capricorn Group

Finally, we've got a life insurer called Santam Namibia and a short-term insurer called Santam Namibia. We've also got a 30% stake in a telco company called Paratus Telecommunications, which is actually a national success story. It was founded in Namibia and has since expanded into seven countries.

As for the future, we'll have to see. Our founder always says starting a bank is a vote of confidence in the economy of a country. At this stage, we are very much focused on Botswana and Namibia as our primary target areas, working largely in Namibia. Namibia makes up about 90% of our key indicators. Even though we're a large banking player, there's a lot of opportunity still for us to expand.

THINUS PRINSLOO MD, CAPRICORN GROUP

"Namibia makes up about 90% of our key indicators. Even though we're a large banking player, there's a lot of opportunity still for us to expand."

Our primary focus is to enable our clients to conduct their business in Namibia. We are primarily a bank and provide funding to our clients wherever possible, making sure they are aware of opportunities. But in the end, it's our clients who should be doing most of the business, growing Namibia from manufacturing to tourism, mining and agriculture. We are driv-



Capricorn Group's diversified asset base has many strands across the regional economy.

ing that aspect quite strongly to make sure our clients get the right opportunities.

Capricorn's plentiful and profitable assets in Namibia make it both a market leader and a key player in understanding the forces driving attraction to the market. How does diversification factor into your various investment decisions and what are the main growth areas you are targeting over the coming years?

TP: No major investments are currently under consideration, other than replicating what we've done here in Botswana. It's about making sure that in the banking space we have enough diversity across all sectors to not have systemic risk where we lend.

There's certainly a big opportunity via the asset management angle for people to invest their money for government returns. We've also been supporting the government quite strongly with bonds that they issued during these last few years in terms of raising funding.

Our main focus is on growing our operating entities and making sure we identify opportunities for that growth. We've already started the journey of convergence with telecommunications operators.

Time will tell to what extent telecommunications operators and banking, telecommunications operators and financial services are really converging, versus being more complementary, to provide growth opportunities and more seamless services.

We are Connectors of Positive Change

Visit [Capricorn.com.na](https://www.capricorn.com.na) to find out more about our diversified portfolio of banking and asset management services provided by our subsidiaries, Bank Windhoek and Capricorn Asset Management in Namibia and Bank Gaborone in Botswana.

Capricorn Group

Business chiefs eager to add greater value locally, not abroad

Despite plentiful raw materials, little final product is actually created within the country, a trend that officials aim to reverse

There is little doubt that Namibia stands on the edge of a bright new chapter in its socioeconomic development story as the up and coming nation seeks to optimize economic growth from its enviable array of renewables and traditional fossil fuels, including oil and gas and zero-carbon hydrogen and ammonia.

This exciting energy theme formed the central plank of BON Governor !Gawaxab's presentation at last year's annual symposium, a forum designed to bring together policy experts, academics, and economic development stakeholders to discuss the economic and policy issues on an identified subject: energy. His speech emphasized the rich potential of renewables, but also warned of the challenges that lie ahead in the maximization of such resources.

"Scaling up renewable energy is no easy task and calls for mobilizing massive savings and investing them productively in a risky environment," he said. "Renewables bring far-reaching benefits in terms of human health, energy access, environmental protection, and the response to climate change, along with the potential to create new jobs around the world.

"Sustainable energy finance is essential in the energy transition and innovation. Meeting a future global increase in energy demand in a sustainable way while reducing emissions from existing infrastructure will require billions of dollars of investment. However, there is currently a gap of many hundreds of billions of dollars between existing investments and what is required. This means that, as a country, we will need to ensure that the investment climate is conducive to attracting such investments, in addition to mobilizing local resources.



Tom Alweendo
Minister of Mines and Energy

around the world where developing countries have obtained windfalls from oil and gas but eventually ended up poorer than before. We must avoid the resource curse at all costs. We must learn from the experiences of others."

The BON chief added exploration activities should also generate new infrastructures such as roads, railway lines, electricity supplies, schools, and hospitals that, although provided for the minerals industry and its workforce, can also benefit the rest of the population. "It should contribute to developing skills and local businesses at the local level," he said. "Skills development should entail using the migration policy to facilitate skills transfer and the acquisition of skills that are not locally available.

"Meanwhile, the economy can be stimulated as mineral companies forge multiple outward linkages — backward to industries that supply goods and services or forwards to industries that process mineral outputs."

Buried treasures are key wealth creator

The dominant factor in Namibia's rise to prominence in international trade and investment circles in recent years is a powerful mining industry that continues to go from strength to strength. The industry generates 20% of GDP and is a huge source of employment, foreign earnings and FDI.

"Minerals are the future, especially those needed for energy storage," states Tom Alweendo, Minister of Mines and Energy. "People talk about lithium, for example, and we currently have people doing explorations. We don't know to what extent we have those raw materials, but we probably do have them, hence we need to explore more to discover them. However, our strategy is to say if such minerals are so critical for energy transitions, such as for batteries, then we want to have investors who are going to produce the actual batteries here in Namibia; we don't want to export jobs.

"Through appropriate management and allocation of oil, gas and green hydrogen revenues, Namibia can promote economic diversification and build the basis for higher and stable growth. The critical challenge for us is to harness the oil, gas and green hydrogen resources by making the right strategic choices and synchronizing their implementation in a context that improves the lives of the poor through increased investment in health, education, physical infrastructure and other non-oil sectors.

"However, this will only be possible if the government approaches the oil and gas sector and the green hydrogen initiatives in a national, rational, and strategic manner. We are fully aware that these sectors cannot only bring significant financial resources and enormous transformational opportunities but also come with challenges. There are many examples

NIPDB'S TOP NINE SECTORS FOR FDI

1 Namibia is endowed with diverse indigenous energy sources and has the potential to become energy self-sufficient via renewables and could become a net exporter of power to the broader Southern African region with proper investment.

2 Namibia is set to become a leading low-cost green hydrogen producer and exporter. This exciting new industry has the potential to propel Namibia onto the zero-carbon map.

3 With the discovery of new goldmines, fresh investment in the precious metals and mining industries is certain and encouraged. The sector includes activities like the production and processing of various metals, sand, concrete and construction materials.

4 Newly discovered oil deposits means Namibia is set to become a major player in the fossil fuel industry. The government has pledged to provide all the support to expedite field development for production by 2026.

5 A tourist paradise, Namibia offers unique attractions, strong cultural heritage and well-managed, pristine land. Opportunities exist within product diversification via the development of luxury accommodation, conferencing, cruise and film tourism.

6 To date, Namibia is a net importer of fruits and vegetables with very limited processing done in the country and is the only country in Africa with market access for beef exports into North America and Europe. A myriad of investment opportunities exist across the entire value chain of the livestock and horticulture industries.

7 Two world-class, congestion-free ports that have recently undergone significant upgrades and a quality road infrastructure network that is ranked second in Africa. The sector has always been lucrative and will grow exponentially as the local and regional economies grow and become more interconnected

8 Despite being the largest producer of solar sea-salt in Sub-Saharan Africa, Namibia does not have a sizable chemical plant at the point of primary input source. This presents an immense opportunity for a large-scale investment in a chemical plant.

9 Namibia boasts a strong local business services sector, fueled by sophisticated banking and financial systems. The three most promising enterprises are call centers, training centers and full business process outsourcing centers. Namibians are adept linguistically and the highly literate and educated population, includes a vibrant, hardworking and trainable young generation.



Namibia's impressive deposits of diamonds make it a leading player in the jewelry sector.

Abundant resources really catch the eye of keen investors

From precious minerals to black gold and solar and wind power for green hydrogen projects, Namibia's energy resources are world-class

Heavily reliant on mining revenues for many decades, Namibia is now embracing clean energy from renewables to attract leading investors for green hydrogen and ammonia manufacturing, as Minister Alweendo (TA) discusses.

Mining and energy are two of the most dynamic sectors in your economy. Please give us an overview of your 2023 priorities.

TA: Our economy for decades has been dominated by mining. Mining makes up to 20% of our GDP and that is a huge sector. Therefore, minerals are really something that we are keen to make sure something to the country. The problem is Africa, which has so many minerals. The unfortunate thing is that with those minerals, people come and take them away and disappear somewhere else while Africa continues to be poor. What we have decided to do is to say that our minerals need to work for us.

Of course, we welcome investors, but we do not want investors who are only going to take out and take away the minerals and add value to them somewhere else. As an economy, we're exporting jobs, and this is one of our difficulties in terms of job creation. If we were to add more value to our minerals, we would perform better.

Namibia has all sorts of minerals, the main exports being diamonds, uranium and gold. With diamonds we have started to add more value. We have a lot of companies that are polishing and cutting the diamonds here. We want to add more of those, but also putting those diamonds in jewelry. Why can't we make the jewelry here in Namibia rather than export the polished and cut diamonds?

Namibia has ambitious goals to become a global leader in green hydrogen production, but how do you intend to accomplish this?

TA: We are promoting ourselves as a continental hub for green hydrogen. We have investors working with us and the idea is that by 2027, we should be producing 10-12 million tonnes/year of green hydrogen. It is an ambitious plan, but we are certainly going to make it. In fact, during the last COP27 in Egypt, we launched our green hydrogen strategy that will then chart the path of how we are going to be working to where we are producing green hydrogen, so that is all part of energy issues. Then you talk about how we can then reach net zero. In fact, Namibia is going to probably reach net zero much faster than anybody else as that green hydrogen will be used in our own industry, but also mostly for export.

We have signed a couple of Memorandums of Understandings (MOUs) for off take agreements with European countries, like Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands. It will help to decarbonize the globe, it's not just for our own use, but for the countries that are waste polluters, and therefore if they can have green hydrogen that is produced in Namibia, we will then reach net zero faster than anyone else.

Namibia recently made significant offshore oil discoveries that could change your economic landscape. Considering green hydrogen and oil are star players on opposing sides of the energy spectrum, please give us some insight into how the pursuit of large-scale oil exploration might support your green hydrogen ambitions.

TA: We've told investors we need to monetize the oil discoveries as soon as possible and, hopefully, in four of five years' time we should be able to produce the first oil. It does take some time. Normally it can take up to seven or eight years, but I think that we can expedite the process so that we can produce oil soon.

The question people ask is how is it possible that Namibia can embrace renewables on the green hydrogen side while also wanting to promote fossil fuel? Is that in any way a contradiction? Our view is that countries that have got resources, energy resources like fossil fuel, do not believe it is fair for someone to demand to say not to use it and just start to invest in renewables, which is much harder to attract investors.

For example, with the climate Paris Agreement, the rich countries have promised that they are going to make \$100 billion available for people to invest in renewables, but that money is never available. If you ask, nobody knows where to get that money. It can't be correct to say, if I find another resource like oil that can be exploited and monetized that I should not do that. Therefore, it is not a contradiction.

Despite the US and the UK being big producers, there are people who want to say that African countries should not do that because it is going to create more pollution. Again, our argument is that Africa, as a continent, contributes less than 4% to the carbon emissions causing climate change. You can't put so much pressure on us as if we were the biggest polluter. The biggest polluters are the industrialized nations who continue to do that. Therefore, for us we don't see a contradiction in embracing both.

TOM ALWEENDO MINISTER OF MINES AND ENERGY

"We believe that by exploiting and monetizing our fossil fuels, we can perform better and move faster on investing in renewables."

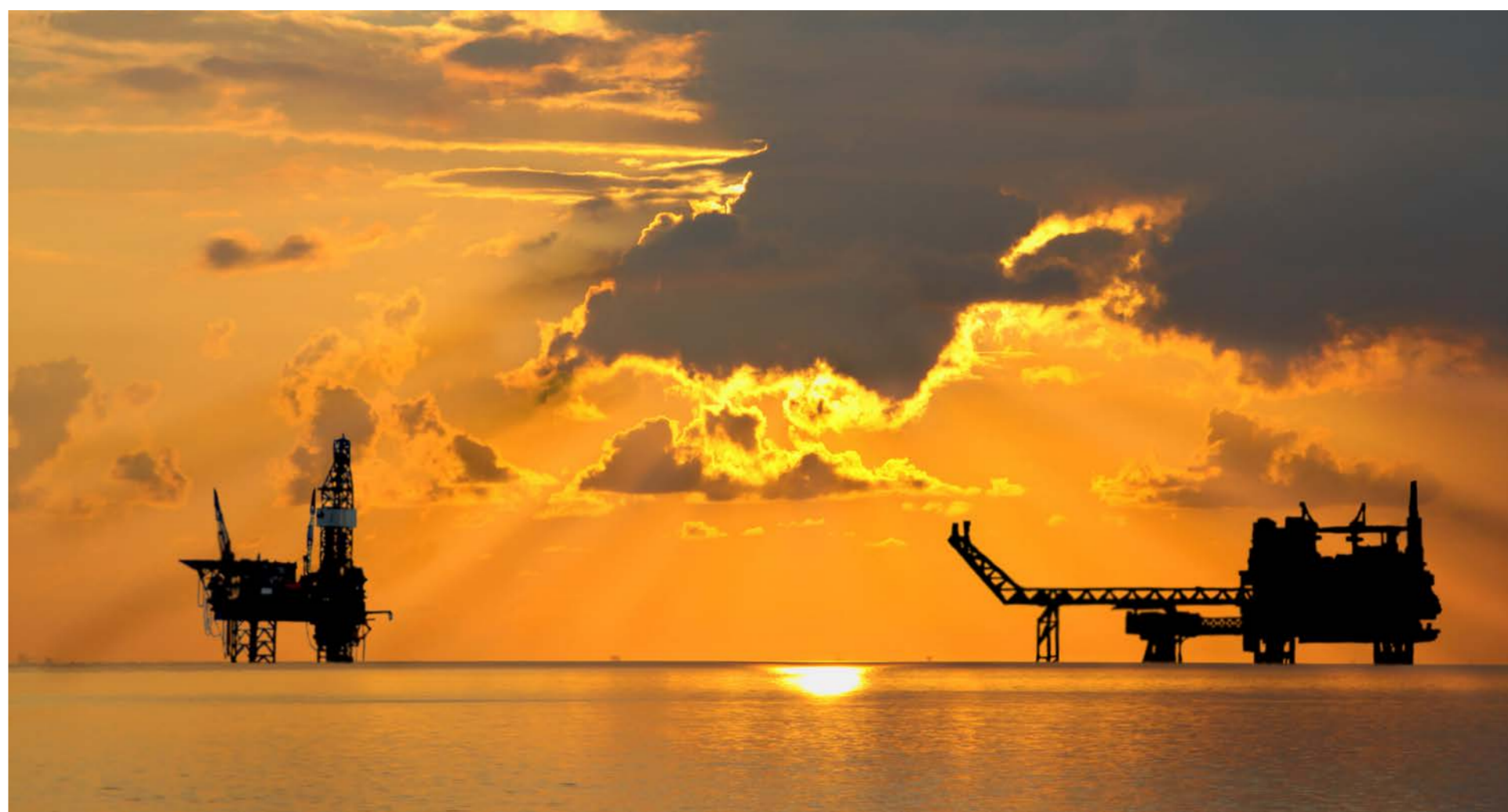
We believe that by exploiting and monetizing our fossil fuels, we can perform better and move faster on investing in renewables. Our challenges, unlike other continents are poverty and inequality. In fact, when people talk about energy transition, the African people ask, transitioning from what? We don't have energy; we need more energy. What we have is energy poverty and, therefore, if I have a source that can give me that energy, fossil fuel, I should probably do that.

I'm not saying that to disregard the fact that we know that climate change is for real, but we are simply making an argument to say that people who are the biggest contributor to that, they should probably be the ones to reduce their emissions much faster than us. They emit over 80% of the problem, so I cannot be the only one to stop doing certain things while they continue doing the same thing.

There is no contradiction whatsoever, but this can give us rapid abilities to address poverty, unemployment and inequality. That way, it can create other subindustries simply because they need them to supply this new industry and that way, it's going to be much more meaningful to them even in the local economy.

Why should readers of USA Today pick Namibia as their investment destination?

TA: Namibia welcomes investors and while they obviously have their own demands from their shareholders, we have our shareholders, the Namibian people. We want investors to satisfy both sets of shareholders., thereby creating a win-win outcome for such investments. We need to rethink how a win-win solution really works as Africa has all the resources, but continues to be the poorest continent, which is wrong. That's the biggest challenge we have.



While pledging to pioneer zero-carbon fuels of the future like green hydrogen, Namibia is also working to develop its reserves of fossil fuels to build the foundations for a cleaner future.

Namibia strikes gold with a wealth of resources set to energize the economy

Namibia's oil and gas sector had fallen behind other African powerhouses, but recent finds have completely changed its outlook

During a recent televised address by President Geingob, the leader highlighted how his country is accelerating toward a "new frontier of prosperity" through a combination of major oil and gas discoveries and growing investment and interest in green hydrogen and green ammonia manufacturing projects and exports.

While firmly focused on such zero-carbon fuels of the future, Namibia is certainly not taking its eye off the ball when it comes to the exploration and commercialization of traditional fossil fuels. Spearheading the charge in this fiscal segment is the National Petroleum Corporation of Namibia (NAMCOR) and the state-owned entity recently had a reason to celebrate as, in partnership with Shell Namibia and QatarEnergy, it made a light oil discovery in the Jonker-1X deep-water exploration well in the famous Orange Basin, which sits almost 300 kilometers off the coast of southern Namibia.

This success follows on from two other significant high-quality light oil finds made by Shell and TotalEnergies in February 2022. Overall, according to industry estimates, Namibia's four offshore and four onshore basins contain 11 billion barrels of oil and 2.2 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

The latest discovery came after four months of intensive drilling operations and delighted industry officials said the encouraging results from the well were a geological testament to the exciting and world-class hydrocarbon potential of the Orange Basin's deep waters. NAMCOR is now looking forward to the appraisal activities and its collaborative relationship with the government and two international joint venture partners to fully assess the commerciality of the discovery. Shell and QatarEnergy each has a 45% interest in the venture, while NAMCOR holds a 10% share, as it does in all exploration projects that take place in the country.

Preparing for the next stage

Namibia is highly experienced in hydrocarbon exploration and NAMCOR maintains excellent databases that contain the results of previous projects. However, almost all countries that possess a nascent energy industry require heavy imports of necessary knowhow if they are to develop upstream projects that will reach their full potential.

NAMCOR has been extremely active in this field and established strong relationships with experienced players like those referenced

above, although the company acknowledges that the scale of the hydrocarbon finds requires the small nation to do more to fully prepare itself for the development and production work that will be taking place. Namibia needs to gain expertise in these areas quickly, while also ensuring that the expanding industry benefits the country and its citizens as much as possible.

"The recent oil discoveries in the country will only be beneficial if managed transparently and inclusively, with a focus on local content and the involvement of the next generation," explained Tom Alweendo, Minister of Mines and Energy, at the Namibia International Energy Conference in April. Exploiting the finds "must help unlock industrial activities through the transfer of technology, more value addition in domestic supply sectors, the generation of indirect jobs along the supply chain, and the

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MINISTER OF MINES AND ENERGY
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creation of business opportunities for entrepreneurs from local procurement," he added.

His ministry has drafted a National Upstream Petroleum Local Content Policy and it held a workshop in May to gather feedback from industry stakeholders, at which Alweendo clarified that: "Local content is defined as the active participation of Namibians in the oil and gas sector through training, employment and the provision of goods and services. We are drawing a distinction between local content and local ownership."

Welcome mat greets foreign partners

The state-owned NAMCOR is eager to team up with leading market participants from around the world so that their highly sought after expertise, skills and knowledge can be transferred to local workers for the advantage of future generations.

Unlike some other countries, its frameworks for these partnerships will not be unfeasibly stringent, as it believes that the most important thing for Namibia is to get its oil flowing out of the ground as quickly as possible — both to benefit the population and to take advantage of the limited window of opportunity open for hydrocarbons as a result of the global energy transition. Therefore, NAMCOR intends to build on the enabling environment it has already established for exploration to ensure that the climate for investors in development is equally enabling and production can begin by 2027 or 2028.

An exciting year ahead

The global oil and gas industry's attention is now firmly fixed on Namibia and the wealth of substantial opportunities it offers in the future development of its upstream, midstream and downstream sectors.

Numerous interested enquiries have already been received from potential investors in the politically stable country that has robust rule of law, a great environment for doing business and where the necessary infrastructure has already been set up. Those conditions have persuaded many international enterprises to enter the market recently. These include oil giants like Chevron, as well as oilfield service companies such as Halliburton and Baker Hughes, and more licenses are likely to change hands this year.

This year is also expected to bring further interesting news about Namibian hydrocarbons and NAMCOR's partnership ventures. For example, TotalEnergies has begun to appraise its discovery, which will determine the size of what could prove to be one of the biggest finds in Africa for a very long time, and Chevron has started to drill the first of three appraisal wells as part of a six-month campaign. In addition, Portuguese company Galp will be drilling a well this year, as might a French enterprise, and another firm is working on a very large multi-client 3-D survey in the Orange Basin.

Growing economic contribution

The unprecedented interest from international oil companies and hydrocarbon service providers that NAMCOR is now receiving has brought with it some adjustments to the company's business focuses.

In the last few years leading up to the discoveries, the company had been concentrating on building up the downstream sections of its business. These include operating and managing a new 75-million-liter storage terminal for petroleum products like diesel, petrol, jet fuel and heavy fuel that the government had established.

Plus NAMCOR had been aggressively pushing forward in the domestic retail space by constructing a lot of service stations to increase its footprint and market share. As a result of these activities, the company has been growing expo-

nentially over the past five years. In addition, while it was waiting for hydrocarbon discoveries to be made in the country — which it was always confident would happen at some point — NAMCOR decided to look beyond Namibia for opportunities to increase its revenue stream, despite being still a relatively small company at the global level.

In particular, it investigated the upstream sectors of countries like Angola and Nigeria, to see if it could acquire any suitable producing assets that were being offered by some of the international oil companies that were leaving those markets.

Last year, NAMCOR secured success in a bid for production assets in Angola Block 15/06 and signed an agreement with the Angolan state oil company Sonangol to buy a 10% interest in that block, plus two additional exploration blocks. This purchase represented a significant investment from NAMCOR of about \$500 million.

Despite the fact that the emphasis of NAMCOR's business operations has now swung to hydrocarbon upstream activities, internally it is preparing to transition from an oil and gas company into an energy entity. NAMCOR believes that Namibia is one of the few countries that has the abundance of sun and wind

TOM ALWEENDO
MINISTER OF MINES AND ENERGY
"Local content is defined as the active participation of Namibians in the oil and gas sector through training, employment and the provision of goods and services."

resources needed to produce green hydrogen competitively and that the country can, therefore, be the hub in Africa — and indeed the world — for that sustainable fuel.

Not wanting to be left behind in the renewables and green hydrogen space, the company has recently created a department to consider its future strategies for sustainable energies. While slowly starting to venture into the green arena, it currently still sees itself as an oil and gas company: the core of its business is hydrocarbons and that is where it wants to make the biggest impact and contribution to the country.

With both Namibia's hydrocarbon sector and NAMCOR finally taking their place on the global stage, the company is very much looking forward to increasing the contribution it makes to the Namibian economy and to playing a more meaningful role as a world-class petroleum organization in the African oil and gas space, as well as in the renewable energy field.

OIL AND GAS SECTOR IN NUMBERS



Namibia has four offshore and four onshore basins



Three major oil discoveries have been made in 2022 and 2023



In FY 2021/22, NAMCOR's revenues were \$193 million



NAMCOR has a 10.8% share of Namibia's commercial fuels market



Estimated reserves of 11 billion barrels of oil and 2.2 trillion cubic feet of natural gas



Modern and well-developed legislative and licensing framework for oil and gas



NAMCOR achieved a gross profit of nearly \$15 million in FY 2021/22



NAMCOR plans to have a total of 33 service stations by 2024



Namibia's industrial landscape is taking shape in the wake of new oil and gas discoveries.



Modern logistics infrastructure at Walvis Bay has made the nation an import/export hub.

Openings abound for foreign investors and global partners

Since independence, Namibia's progress has advanced in quantum leaps, with the country moving forward at pace with the support of leading foreign allies

With Namibia on the verge of a stepping up onto the international stage through the development of its natural resources with the help of foreign investors and dynamic enterprises, the ongoing economic transformation via the implementation of a robust, effective governance architecture is set to yield more dividends.

Supporting and facilitating enterprise and investment is the Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NCCI), a body regarded as the country's "Premier Voice of Business" and one that enjoys a cordial working relationship with the government and other important stakeholders. They include labor groups, academia, faith-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society and the donor and development community.

Established soon after Namibian independence in 1990 to serve as the primary representative body of the entire private sector, NCCI is the leading business representative and support organization and boasts membership representation across the whole country in all sectors and industries. Headquartered in Windhoek, the trade body is committed to advocate for a fair, equal, conducive and competitive business environment across Namibia, through policy negotiations, stakeholder engagements, capacity building, and other membership services.

The NCCI's dedicated research and advocacy team works with policymakers to ensure the interests of businesses are represented. This includes economic policy review and reporting, influencing new legislation on behalf of the private sector, and giving firms a unifying voice in Parliament. The chamber also organizes regular consultative meetings with political leaders to keep the public sector abreast of issues affecting the business community.

CHARITY MWIYA
CEO, NCCI

"Investors with a value addition aim will be warmly received in Namibia, especially if their value-add aim is mineral beneficiation or agri-processing."

"Sectors that are attractive to investors include renewable energy, agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, logistics including transportation, building construction including housing, education from primary through secondary to tertiary level, healthcare from primary to specialty services, mining and quarrying and financial services including commercial banking, wealth management and merchant banking and insurance — long- and short-term," says Charity Mwiya, NCCI CEO.

"As for large scale projects of an infrastructural development nature government is open to public-private partnership (PPP) arrangements that can be structured on a build-own-operate, or build-operate-own-transfer basis. The country has a PPP unit that is housed in the Ministry of Finance and Public Enterprises as a directorate.

According to the experienced businesswoman, the republic's free market economy wants, and expects, foreign investment, although new



Namibia is on the road to success thanks to its government's strategic development plans.



Charity Mwiya
CEO, NCCI

subsidiary of De Beers that is owned equally with the Namibian government. Known as AMV#3, the highly specialized ship uses sub-sea crawling extraction techniques to retrieve diamonds from the seabed off the coast of Namibia for processing on board. At nearly 180 meters in length, it is now the largest diamond recovery vessel in the world and the new flagship of the Debeemarine Namibia fleet. The vessel is expected to operate for at least 30 years.

Precious stones found on land and sea

Meanwhile, Namdeb is a land-based prospecting (exploration), mining and rehabilitation operation and service company. The heart of the operations is along the southwest coast, with land-based operations being centered around Oranjemund and additional activity taking place at satellite mines near Lüderitz as well as along the Orange River. Namdeb is run as a joint venture between the government and De Beers Group through Namdeb Holdings.

Law firm WKH thrives

Companies seeking to do business in Namibia can call on a trusted and talented partner

As Namibia's largest law firm and with a strong legacy of serving businesses in a diverse range of sectors across commercial, labor, tax and corporate law, Dr Weder, Kauta & Hoveka (WKH) is a true Namibian dynamo that is driven by the principle of being the best in the class.

Born in 2006 through a merger between the erstwhile Dr Weder, Kruger & Hartmann and Kamuhanga Basson Inc, WKH has grown impressively and now practices in all fields of the legal profession. The firm's area of focus is wide and includes mining, renewable energy, banking and marine resources, corporate and commercial, mergers and acquisitions, real estate and land acquisitions, labor law, intellectual property including patents and trademarks, criminal and civil legislation and tax law.

At the time of the merger, WKH took the bold decision to embrace the principles of transformation and gender equality and by doing that to deliver world-class legal services with competency, fairness and integrity. The firm employs around 200 people and possesses a good mix of experienced lawyers, including vibrant and ambitious youngsters with a good intellect and sense of law.

"As a firm, we believe in building relationships. You cannot serve a client properly without having a professional relationship," states managing director, André Swanepoel. "We pride ourselves in building long-standing relationships by embracing the 'Three Cs' of mutual trust, namely character, commitment and capability. We have the necessary expertise, state of the art infrastructure and the important contacts that will make your business experience in Namibia one to remember, as will the country you have visited.

"Our footprint has been extended across Namibia and we currently have, apart from our main branch in the capital, four regional offices. One is located in Walvis Bay and is being the center of our new extended international harbor, while another is in the tourist haven of Swakopmund. We also have another office in Ongwediva in the north of

Regardless of where the precious jewels are discovered, they are handled by Namibia Diamond Trading Company (NDTC), overseen by Namdeb Holdings. The firm recognizes and formalizes the efforts of its parents to develop a sustainable downstream diamond industry.

NDTC can trace its roots back to 1988 when the first sorting and valuation activities were established. These activities were through DTC Valuations Namibia, a wholly owned De Beers company which was tasked with the sorting and valuing of Namibian diamonds until the inception of NDTC in January 2007. Today, NDTC prides itself as Namibia's flagship diamond sorting and valuing brand, contributing significantly to national growth and a sustainable future.

Committed to the ethical sourcing and valuation of Namibian diamonds, NDTC has been mandated to continue working tirelessly to advance industry standards, enhance transparency of diamond provenance and improve the livelihoods of artisanal miners. Through best practice principles, the enterprise has set leading ethical, social and environmental standards, including on human rights and labor conditions for its whole value chain. Crucially, implementation of these standards are verified annually through independently assured audits.

NDTC is also continuing to invest in technology and innovative solutions to increase transparency around the provenance and journey of Namibian diamonds, including through GemFair™ and Tracr™, and the joint venture is always looking for ways to improve the livelihoods of artisanal miners.

During a visit to the global diamond hub of Antwerp, Belgium last year, President Geingob highlighted how the much-desired stones play a significant role in bilateral trade. "Namibia's diamond industry is something that should make all Namibians proud and that should benefit the entire Namibian population," he said during a trip to the Antwerp World Diamond Center.



André Swanepoel
Managing Director, WKH

Namibia and one in Grootfontein in the center of the country."

The senior executive notes WKH is not only renowned for its size, but also its professionalism and tailored client services, ideal assets that are, in part, due to its traditional Namibian roots. "We are not owned or controlled by any international firm, although we are closely associated with South Africa and a large international network of firms," Swanepoel adds. "We are also a collaborating firm member of Andersens with an international footprint worldwide.

"Choose us and you will be assured of a service delivery of excellence which is done with integrity and upholding client confidentiality. Namibia's economy is still largely dependent on that of South Africa, mainly due to the lack of manufacturing outlets or industries and many products are still imported from our neighbor, which restricts economic growth. The production of our own goods has become a major drive by our government and, hopefully, will contribute to Namibia becoming self-sufficient to a large extent."

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Namibia's sand dunes are the world's tallest and are famous for meeting ocean waters.

Stunning savannahs teeming with Big Game among Namibia's incredible tourist offerings

An amazing tapestry of wildlife that inhabits beautiful national parks and reserves means visitors can get up close with rare beasts

As one of the world's leading tourist destinations, Namibia continues to capture the hearts and minds of foreign visitors who depart on leading airlines having been enthralled by a diverse topography of compelling natural wonders, unique wildlife, contrasting beautiful scenery, abundant sunshine and wide open spaces, not to mention the incredible pride and hospitality displayed by its welcoming citizens.

International arrival numbers have bounced back strongly following reopening of borders post-pandemic. This was evidenced by official data released in 2022 that showed tourist arrivals into Namibia increased by more than a third year-on-year in 2021 to nearly 233,000. The strong performance was welcomed by Minister of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, Pohamba Shifeta, who forecast tourist numbers of close to one million for 2022 should the positive trend have continued. Leading sources of leisure visitors include European nations like Germany, France, the UK, as well as the US.

"Although the number of tourist arrivals is not at the level it was before the pandemic in 2019, an increase such as this gives us an improved hope that the sector is on its way to recovery," he explained. To this end, his department has developed a Tourism Recovery Plan that sets out a framework for tourism sector recovery process for the next three years.

Such an initiative includes slick new market-

ing and advertising campaigns, although prospective visitors need only glance at embassy websites to gain a glimpse of the delights that lie in store for them. "Visitors are engulfed by a sheer sense of freedom generated by wide and breathtaking horizons, the bluest of skies and a population density which ranks among the lowest in the world," notes the Namibian Embassy in London, adding Windhoek has been frequently voted the cleanest city on the continent.

"Namibia was one of the first countries to include the protection of the environment and sustainable utilization of wildlife in its constitution," it says. "About 15.5% of the country has been set aside as national parks. In these areas, rare and endangered species of animals, birds and plant life are preserved and protected.

"Particular attractions include the Etosha National Park, one of the largest game reserves in Africa which is home to a variety of animals and birds, including several endangered species; the Namib-Naukluft National Park, a vast wilderness and the fourth largest nature conservation area in the world; the Skeleton Coast National Park; and the Fish River Canyon, the world's largest after the Grand Canyon.

"Wilderness and modern amenities co-exist happily in this land of vivid contrasts. Visitors to Namibia can see the country by means of comfortable coach tours, fly-in safaris, self-drive tours, or guided tours tailored to suit individual needs. A large number of lodges and guest farms

Tourism on right track

Namibia is receiving vital support in promoting tourism as a sustainable driver of growth

Namibia's enthusiasm for sustainable tourism development and its steady progress in this field in recent times has been warmly welcomed by leading global industry participants, including officials from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

As the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism, the entity offers plenty of leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide. An intergovernmental organization, UNWTO has nearly 160 member states, six associate members, two observers and over 500 affiliate members.

Promoting sustainable tourism development through relevant policies and practices, as well as policies that make optimal use of environmental resources, respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities and provide socio-economic benefits for all, is a key priority.

Advancing tourism's contribution to poverty reduction and development is another key target. The Madrid-based body aims to achieve

ZURAB POLOLIKASHVILI SECRETARY GENERAL, UNWTO

"By investing in people and projects that make a difference, we can deliver on the sector's potential to drive growth and opportunity for all."

this by maximizing the contribution of tourism to poverty reduction and achieving sustainable development goals by making tourism work as a tool for development and promoting the inclusion of tourism in the development agenda.

"By investing in people and projects that make a difference, we can deliver on the sector's potential to drive growth and opportunity for all," says UNWTO Secretary General, Zurab Pololikashvili. "All the world is talking about sustainability, but we have to define and to realize what is sustainability for us."

"Sustainability is a balance between income — income is created by tourists — and caring about the environment. This is the balance that will help maintain the people coming to different places with cruises, but at the same time to



Zurab Pololikashvili
Secretary General, UNWTO

consider the biodiversity, to think and to support environmental problems."

Education at the heart of UNWTO policy

Looking to the future, Pololikashvili sees education as one of his organization's main priorities when it comes to securing mutual benefits for countries and their guests, with countries like Namibia well placed to take advantage of the help and guidance available.

"Tourism is now becoming a huge industry where you can link it to any other industries, but we want to create an ecosystem where we will have at least five to ten strong entities on each continent over the next three to five years," he explains.

"We want to create business schools, universities and academia, to help and to support countries in education. To create a sustainable way of traveling, we need to educate the young generation, and at the same time educate ourselves and our generation, which will be much more difficult than the new one.

"Tourism is one of the best, fastest and the easiest way to create new jobs, because services are needed everywhere. Now we have excited the worst of the COVID-19 disruption, tourists are everywhere, everything is back and this is the chance and opportunity. Indeed, many countries used this opportunity rather well to jump in the tourism rankings and establish themselves as leaders in the various regions following the pandemic."



Along with World Heritage Sites, Namibia is home to spectacular landscapes and fauna.

are found all over the country. For the more adventurous, there are wilderness safaris, game walks and drives, horse/hiking trails. Popular leisure activities include sand boarding, quad biking, skydiving and paragliding amongst others. Photographic safaris can also be arranged."

"The abundance of game in Etosha National Park is somewhat unexpected, showcasing some of the most common and rarest wildlife species," they add. "The areas with thicker vegetation are

POHAMBAM SHIFETA
MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT,
FORESTRY AND TOURISM

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The Pan-African dialogue platform brings together annually key stakeholders of Africa's travel, tourism, hospitality and aviation sectors to network, share insights, and devise strategies for intra-Africa travel and tourism growth across the continent, while enhancing the brand equity of "Destination Africa." It is the only forum of its kind on the continent that highlights tourism as a major economic pillar to diversify African economies.

Namibia's recognition by its peers was certainly well deserved as the public and private sector have worked collaboratively on areas like rethinking tourism and striving towards inclusive tourism growth and development. The republic is best known for its stunning flora and fauna, hence its large portfolio of 20 state-run national parks, private game reserves and communal conservancies.

Etosha National Park is star of the show

Considered the undisputed jewel in the crown of these protected destinations is the breathtaking Etosha National Park, which offers game-watching unsurpassed encounters with a vast array of large wildlife. Visitors can enjoy self-drive or join a guided game drive within the park, meaning Etosha National Park is unique on the massive continent.

"The park's main characteristic is a salt pan so large [5,000 square-kilometers] it can be seen from space," notes its online gateway. Yet there is abundant wildlife that congregates around the waterholes, giving you almost guaranteed game sightings. At the same time, Etosha National Park is one of the most accessible game reserves in Namibia and Southern Africa.

"The park is malaria free, accessible in a regular sedan car and the rest camps provide a range of accommodation as well as restaurants, viewing decks, shops and petrol stations. Luxurious camps in Etosha's remote areas have added top accommodation to its offerings."

The various accommodation options in Etosha

NTB'S TOP 10 TOURIST DESTINATIONS

1
One of the greatest and oldest game parks in Africa is also Namibia's key tourist destination. Home to 114 large and small mammal species, more than 400 recorded bird species, scores of reptiles and even a fish species, Etosha is the country's flagship park.

2
The stunning Fish River Canyon is found in the southern part of Namibia's longest river. This incredible geological landscape is the second-largest canyon in the world and Africa's largest.

3
Without doubt a destination in its own right, being so achingly close to Etosha en route from the Skeleton Coast, the beauty and solitude that is Damaraland is so often missed. The area is home to one of the UNESCO World Heritage sites, Twyfelfontein, which symbolizes the exceptionally rich cultural heritage of the San/Bushmen people in the form of eye-catching rock engravings and paintings.

4
The Namib-Naukluft Park is one of the world's largest conservation areas, stretching from the plateau of central Namibia to the vast basin of the Namib Desert. Wide-open spaces framed by purple-blue mountains and impossible sunsets truly make the park a place to remember.

5
Swakopmund and Walvis Bay offer an oasis where the sea meets the desert. Known as Namibia's adventure capitals, lots of exciting activities are found.

6
Kavango and Zambezi is an area traversed by a complex network of rivers and where relatively high summer rainfalls have created a fertile wilderness of riverine forests, flood plains and swamps.

7
The Kalahari Desert stretches across Eastern Namibia, providing moments of great solitude and poignant reflection.

8
Host to around 15,000 people, Opuwo is the capital of Namibia's Kunene Region and the traditional OvaHimba people.

9
The Spitzkoppe lies west of Usakos, and it is one of Namibia's most photographed and painted outcrops. The imposing granite rocks were formed by the slow cooling of molten masses below the earth's surface.

10
Skeleton Coast Park is a sanctuary for desert-dwelling elephants, rhino and lion and the Kunene River mouth is a vital wetland. As its name suggests, windswept beaches are littered with bones, shipwrecks and other debris.

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