



**Ministry of Mines & Energy**  
"promoting Namibia's mineral, geological and energy resources"

## **Keynote Address**

**By the**

**Hon. Tom Alweendo**

**Minister of Mines and Energy,**

**On the occasion of the**

**Official Inauguration of the B2Gold Otjiko**

**Solar Farm**

**29 May 2017**

- **Director of Ceremonies;**
- **Vice President of BR Gold Group, Mr. Bill Lytle**
- **The Chairman of B2Gold, Dr Leake Hangala;**
- **The Managing Director of B2Gold, Mr Mark Dawe;**
- **Management and staff of B2Gold;**
- **Distinguished guests;**
- **Members of the Media;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

## **Good Morning**

It is my great pleasure to be with you all here this morning for the official opening and inauguration of the B2Gold 7MW Solar Farm.

It is now common knowledge that Namibia boasts with a wealth of renewable energy resources that represents a valuable economic resource for the country. In 2017 the Ministry of Mines and Energy finalised the National Renewable Energy Policy which is intended to provide the necessary thrust to renewable energy development and to serve as a clear signal of the Government's commitment to a clean energy future powered by renewable energy sources.

The overarching mission of this Renewable Energy Policy is to enable access to modern, clean, environmentally sustainable, and affordable energy for all Namibians. It aims to make renewable energy a powerful tool for the

achievement of our short-term and long-term national development goals. This will assist us to climb the development ladder, empowered by access to energy at levels that facilitate engagement in productive activity. Additionally, the Policy's vision is for Namibia to become a regional leader in the development and deployment of renewable energy within southern Africa.

**Director of Ceremonies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As we strive towards Vision 2030, energy remains the number one key input for development. It is therefore no coincidence that both our 5th National Development Plan and the Harambee Prosperity Plan recognize energy as a priority infrastructure needed for our socio-economic development agenda.

We must continue to use local available resources for the benefit of all Namibians. In terms of energy, we have the world's second best solar resource, a significant amount of biomass and an excellent wind regime. I would therefore like to use to this opportunity to motivate all our stakeholders –

more importantly our private sector partners to invest in this sector.

On our side as the Ministry, we will make sure that we create an enabling environment. This we do through tools such as the National Integrated Resource Plan, the National Independent Power Producer (IPP) Policy and the Revised Market Framework Model. The idea here is to make sure that we are approaching the issue of renewable energy in accordance with some of the best practices in the world.

As part of our NDP5, we have a target of 750MW of locally generated energy by the year 2022. This is rather an ambitious target given where we are today. However, this is necessary in order for us to reduce our over reliance on imports of electricity from our neighbours. It is therefore important that we continue to pro-actively plan, structure, manage and develop an energy sector that can optimally support and respond to our development aspirations today, and in the future.

We are also cognizant of the fact that the Government alone cannot shoulder the huge investment that is required

for the development of the country's energy infrastructure. We need the private sector, and we explicitly welcome the active participation of private sector actors. I am therefore happy to indicate that as part of the REFIT program, nine projects in various towns across the country have connected to the national grid, adding a total of 45MW of clean energy.

This facility that we are inaugurating today is yet another demonstration that private sector is responding to our call to participate in the energy generation. The facility will add another 5MW of electricity generation, a welcome contribution towards a sustainable energy generation.

This solar plant will deliver positive economic, environmental and social impacts that is likely to outlive the life of mine. I am also informed that this solar plant will be one of the largest installations of its kind in Namibia. It will serve as a sustainable power solution as B2Gold works to improve economic returns, reduce impacts on the environment, and could potentially be a funding source for community development. The expected saving on the consumption of Heavy Fuel Oil (HFO) is in the region of 20%. This will not only

reduce costs, but will also significantly reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions into our pristine skies.

**Director of Ceremonies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The decision to invest in this solar plant demonstrates B2Gold's commitment to innovative and responsible mining. It complements the company's commitment towards an effective corporate social responsibility.

Here I would like to mention some of the specific SCR programs that B2Gold is spearheading.

- In September last year, B2Gold signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Total Namibia – with Total committing two cents of every litre of HFO sold to B2Gold Namibia, to the Namibian Chamber of Environment;
- The “Re-Wilding the Future” concept – a groundbreaking initiative that B2Gold and the Namibian Chamber of Environment are spearheading. This is a potential public private partnership that will enable

B2Gold and partners to leave a lasting legacy long after B2Gold ceases operations at the Otjikoto Mine. This smart PPP approach is being explored, involving B2Gold Namibia, the Ministry of Environment & Tourism, and the NCE.

- Little Shop of Physics (LSOP) – B2Gold's flagship sustainable education initiative. This is an educational program that originated from Colorado State University in the United States. The program is endorsed by the Ministry of Education, the Namibia Institute of Education and Development (NIED), and the University of Namibia (UNAM). The purpose of LSOP is to overcome traditional barriers to exploring and learning physics in schools. The vision is to integrate LSOP methodologies into the natural sciences curriculum at UNAM for future teachers; and
- Last but not least – B2Gold's Otjikoto Nature Reserve. The company established the Otjikoto Nature Reserve on 15,000ha of land adjacent to its mining operation. The Reserve aims to increase the number of species in the area, restore and conserve the habitat of the



area, supports conservation and other biodiversity research, and provide conservation and biodiversity education opportunities to surrounding communities and schools from across Namibia. In 2017, a total of more than 1,000 school learners and more than 200 teachers visited the Otjikoto Nature Reserve.

The examples clearly show that B2Gold is setting the mining industry standard for sustainable approaches to livelihood development, health, conservation and education. I would like to encourage other mining companies to emulate these good examples so that together we meaningfully address our socio-economic development challenges.

Before I conclude my remarks I would like to say a word or two about the need for an effective partnership between the Government and the private sector. It is my firm belief that our socio-economic development challenges will be addressed more successfully when there is an effective partnership between the Governments, the private sector as well as with the citizens. It cannot be correct to think that it is only the Government that can or must solve all the developmental challenges facing us as a country. There is

no doubt that the Government has certain responsibilities and obligations to fulfil; but so do all of us.

In the main the Government relies on business to invest and grow the economy that is able to generate taxes that the Government needs. Businesses in turn depend on the Government to create the regulatory environment that is conducive to doing business. We therefore need to work together where the Government shapes the rules of the economic game and business activities take place within it. It is only through this partnership that the much needed trust can be created so that the different interests of Government and the private sector can be harmonized.

It is also true that we will do better as a country when we as citizens are involved; when we take active participation in the development process. Many a time we do not get involved and our excuse is that we believe we are too insignificant to make a difference. We believe that whatever I can do cannot have a meaningful impact on what must change. Yes, as an individual I might be too small and insignificant. But imagine what the power of many can do – what we together can do.

Thus we need a true partnership among all stakeholders that is based on mutual trust and rooted in our collective desire to prosper as a nation. We need to view our challenges as our collective responsibility and not that of the Government alone. Both Government and the private sector - and eventually society - have everything to lose in equal measure if we do not succeed in our developmental efforts.

As a country, we do have certain competitive advantages: our wildlife, our natural ecosystems and our contrasting landscapes. We also have an effective policy environment thanks to focused government efforts. Namibia stands head and shoulders above many other countries in terms of its socio-economic development potential. It is for us to leverage our macro-economic and political stability in the execution of our socio-economic development agenda.

Let me once again congratulate B2Gold on the investment you have made in the promotion of renewable energy. This is a great example that I hope more private sector investors will emulate.

I am therefore honoured to officially inaugurate this facility.

**I thank you!**