

Welcoming remarks by Ms Ulitala Hiveluah

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At the official opening of the 3rd Global LME Conference

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It gives me great pleasure to address to you this morning, to welcome you most sincerely to the Third Global Large Marine Ecosystem Conference, and of course to Swakopmund and to our beloved country, Namibia.

In Namibia, we are fully aware of the treasures that the Benguela Current brings to our shores. As you may know, we have the most valuable marine diamond resources in the world – Namibia is well known for the excellent quality gems that are mined from the seafloor; we also have valuable oil and gas resources which we are only now beginning to tap. However, as the Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources, I am best qualified to talk about our country's fisheries resources and what they mean to us.

The fishing industry is the second most important export earner in Namibia, after mining. The sector plays a significant role in terms of production, employment, foreign exchange earnings and government revenue. Since independence in 1990, Namibia has built a modern and efficient fisheries management framework, entrenched the concept of sustainable development and made it clear that we will monitor fishing activity and enforce our laws when necessary. Namibia has also strongly supported the idea of ecosystem-based management and was a driving force behind the formation and development of the BCLME Programme and, latterly, the Benguela Current Commission. I am proud to say that, as a region, the BCLME is moving steadily towards joint fisheries surveys and management plans. Already, a Small Pelagic Working Group is deliberating over the transboundary assessment of shared stocks such as sardinella and horse mackerel.

As a country, we are honoured to host the Secretariat of the Benguela Current Commission here in Swakopmund. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretariat for the excellent work they have done in organising this international conference that has attracted experts from all over the world. Thank you for your hard work.

And finally, to each and every participant, I hope you will enjoy the time spent in my country, that your discussions and deliberations will be fruitful and enriching and that you will return to your home countries with favourable stories about the welcome you received here in Namibia – on the shores of the Benguela Current.