**Symposium on animal movements and satellite tracking in Namibia**

**Otjikoto Private Game Reserve, B2Gold, 24 November 2016**

**Welcoming remarks**

I am pleased to welcome you to this very important symposium on animal movements and satellite tracking in Namibia. It is very exciting and encouraging to see such a positive response, and turn up at the symposium. As you know, wildlife tracking is becoming important for the conservation of wildlife species of interest.

Wildlife tracking and associated technological advances gives us opportunity to study and better understand the movement and activity patterns, space use, habitat and resource selection, and many other ecological and biological attributes about different species. In the ever changing environment with increasing human population, habitat fragmentation and degradation, changing land uses, global climate change, wildlife tracking is becoming more relevant, and one of the very important conservation tools available to conservation managers and scientists to better manage wildlife to respond to these changing environmental conditions.

Today we are gathered here as the practitioners in the field to share with each other of our work in the area of wildlife tracking with both marine and terrestrial animals species. I am very pleased to note that we have diverse mix of participants attending the symposium, and that we have presenters that came from outside of Namibia. As you may have seen from the symposium programme, we hope to achieve the following by the end of the symposium:

* Get better understanding of who is doing what, where and how,
* Gain more insight on available data, and how it is being managed,
* Identify key gabs and priorities in our knowledge of how animals use space and natural resources
* And to further identify potential for comparative and synergistic work amongst others.

Last night Dr. Christopher Brown mentioned about the status of wildlife research and publication of research results in Namibia. We also learned from Alice Jarvis about the establishment of an online environmental journal. It is my wish that all presenters at the symposium would write up their presentations as papers for publication in this new Namibian journal.

I wish to thank Dr. Christopher Brown of Namibia Chamber of Environment and Dr. Morgan Hauptfleisch of the Namibia University of Science and Technology for teaming up with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism to organize this very important symposium. I also appreciate and acknowledge the contributions of the other members of the organizing committee, and the team here at Otjikoto Game Reserve for your hospitality, and also for hosting us.

I also wish to thank B2Gold and its management, especially the Managing Director, for their commitment to support conservation and environmental sustainability, and for being the leader in this regard. It is very encouraging to see the private sector and civil society teaming up with the Government to support conservation work. Namibia is globally respected as a leader in innovative conservation approaches that directly draws benefit for wildlife and people that share their land with wildlife. We boast that more than 45% of our total land surface is dedicated to wildlife management, and we further boast about the greatest wildlife recovery over the past two decades – we believe that we have more elephants, lion, black and white rhino and other species than we had some hundred years ago. All these successes are a result of mutually respectful partnership established by our Ministry with other role players in the conservation and environment sector. B2Gold, NCE and NUST, our ministry is looking forward to building a lasting partnership to advance the conservation and capacity building efforts in Namibia.

By this, I welcome you all to this symposium, and trust that you will have fun besides the busy programme for today and tomorrow. Prof. Norman Owen-Smith of the Centre for African Ecology at the University of Witwatersrand, Peter Hancock from Botswana, Kerri Wolters of VulPro in South Africa, and Monique Mckenzie of St Andrews University in Scotland, I extend a special welcome to you, and trust that this is the beginning of the many visits you will make to Namibia to work with us to advance positive conservation outcomes.

I thank you!