



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

Remarks

By

**Minister of Education, Arts and Culture
Hon. Ester Anna Nghipondoka,**

On the Occasion of the

Launch of the Arts and Culture Sector COVID-19 Relief Fund

Date: Wednesday, 10 June 2020

Venue: National Theatre of Namibia, Auditorium Foyer

Distinguished Guests

Officials of the Government of the Republic of Namibia

Representatives of the NACN Board

Culture Sector Representatives

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to sincerely welcome you to this event. As it has been stated, the Arts and Culture Sector has suffered enormous repercussions because of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Gatherings were halted immediately when the pandemic hit, which resulted in many arts and cultural practitioners losing opportunities to share their talents and make income, since many of them rely on gatherings to display creative expressions and manifestations, as well as their livelihoods.

In these very challenging times of the coronavirus pandemic, The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture acknowledge the vulnerability of the arts and culture sector as a whole and the threats posed to the status of artists and cultural practitioners, particularly women and the differently abled.

It is more important than ever to join efforts to strengthen the protection and promotion of open and democratic societies, where artists and creators can work under free, fair and safe conditions, and where artistic freedom is protected and promoted.

The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture being the main custodian for Arts and Culture initiated a programme to support the sector and its practitioners during this difficult time. Therefore, the Ministry directed the Directorate of Arts and the National Arts Council of Namibia, which is government's funding body for the arts

sector, to formulate a response that could be supported, which has brought us to this day.

The proposal aims to create a temporary Relief Fund for the sector that would provide once-off support to individual artists, cultural practitioners, arts and culture organisations. This is to encourage continued creativity, artistry and practise, as well as to provide training to empower sectorial players in various relevant skills and knowledge such as in digitisation and use of online platforms to share and promote their work. Furthermore, the need for more dialogues with the community became apparent, so the Fund will make provision for a platform for practitioners to engage on topical issues with regard to the sector. Lastly, the opportunity showed starkly the need for evidence and statistics on the arts and culture sector, which will also be one of the areas that the Fund makes provision for.

To fund this initiative, I am pleased to share with you that the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture availed a 5,500,000 (Five point Five million) Namibia dollars from its internal budget for the initiative to be implemented through the National Arts Council of Namibia. It is hoped that this support will help ease the effects of COVID-19 for the time being and in the hope that things will return to normal before the end of the year.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Therefore, I am pleased to share with you the Arts and Culture COVID-19 Relief Fund, which will assist in providing some relief to the arts and culture sector, even if minimally. The Relief Fund will serve as an important contribution to ensuring the continued protection and promotion of our nations rich arts and culture landscape through funding and other initiatives, which will be provided to arts and culture practitioners, and organisations over a three-month period.

To screen and approve applications, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture will appoint a seven (7) member committee, composed of two ministry representatives from the Directorate of Arts and Directorate of National Heritage and Culture Programmes, two members of the National Arts Council of Namibia and three public nominees to be selected by the arts and culture community.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Arts and culture is resilient, create tolerant, united, understanding, appreciative, particularly during challenging times such as the one we are currently faced with. As a sector, arts and culture also offers multiple opportunities for job creation and income generation for many creative people and cultural practitioners, therefore, contributing to the sustainable development of the nation. In this time of a world economic recession that is also affecting Namibia, the government wants to support viable arts projects that will impact the lives of artists, their beneficiaries, communities and the economy of the country at large.

Director of ceremonies

In conclusion, the Ministry calls upon both the public and private broadcasters to lend a hand in the relief program towards the sector by playing and using more locally produced content to enable artists to earn income through royalties, and to show patriotism towards local creators and producers. We also request our local authorities to support the initiatives of arts and culture practitioners and organisations, by offering free venues such as town halls and open spaces to carry out their activities and with other financial or in-kind support to encourage creativity and cultural expression in all our towns and regions. We also call upon the private sector to support the arts and culture sector in any way that they can, to help ease the difficulties being experienced at the current moment.

The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture will continue to carry out its mandate with regard to the Arts and Culture Sector, as well as to support and call upon our artists to undertake innovative and creative activities to develop the sector.

Finally, without further ado, I would like to officially launch the National Arts Council of Namibia Arts and Culture COVID -19 Relief Fund.

I thank you.