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Minister of Industrialisation, Trade and SME Development

OATF 2018 is the 19th Edition of the trade fair. The theme for this year is aptly captured: ***"Creating an enabling environment for industrialised local economy"***. I want to commend the visionary leadership of Ongwendiva Town Council and the organizers for the dedication and commitment shown to host this annual event in the chronicles of the town of Ongwediva.

The theme is befitting the time, when Africa has recently concluded the establishment of an African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The key objective of the AfCFTA is to boost intra-African trade, designed to achieve a single continental market; with zero or lower trade tariffs; simplified rules of origin and customs procedures; harmonized

regulations for trade in services; and trade remedies made available to economic players. Last month, at the 31st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU) held in Nouakchott, Mauritania, from 1 - 2 July 2018. Namibia added her voice by signing the AfCFTA, 49 of the 55 member states of the African Union (AU) have now signed the agreement establishing the AfCFTA. Namibia is ready to tap into a single market of about 1.2 billion people, while growing at home and industrializing local economy to produce goods and services with which to trade.

Secondly, OATF 2018 theme is befitting the time - As we are all aware, Namibia successfully hosted the recent ended - 38th Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Summit of Heads of State and Government from August 9th to 18th, 2018 in Windhoek at the Safari Court Hotel and Conference Centre under the theme ***“Promoting Infrastructure Development and Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development”***.

In the past, Namibia had been performing the function of Deputy Chairperson of SADC and at the 38th SADC summit saw the ***change in guard*** – Namibia subsequently took charge of the roles and responsibilities of the Chairperson of the vibrant region of SADC. This achievement for Namibia conferred His Excellency Dr Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia as the substantive Chairperson of SADC. Namibia will embrace and inject impetus into economic growth and eventually enable Government and the private sector to address various challenges head-on during the next 2 years steering the SADC organ as chair.

In view of the above, the Ministry of Industrialisation, Trade and SME Development (MITSMED) has a clear mandate to spearhead three very important sectors (namely - industrialisation, trade and SME development), which are not only wide in scope but also very critical for the realisation of the national socio-economic development goals of our country.

We at MITSMED value and believe that SMEs development is the catalyst for the development of the industrialization base of any nation. It is in this connection that we recognize the critical role of Small and Medium – sized Enterprises in the socio-economic development and economic diversification of the country. MITSMED through the “Growth at Home” initiative is committed to support industrial, trade, investment and business activities in the country.

Among many reasons to celebrate this event, is the platform created for SMEs to exhibit products and services. Enabling organized companies operating in various industries to display their latest products and services as well as learning the activities of others businesses, examine market trends and identify business opportunities. Conclusively, it is worth noting that, exhibitions are very important events that bring producers and suppliers of goods and services as well as potential customers together to provide the necessary exposure and opportunities for sales and business linkages. I wish you all success in achieving the objectives of this fair as we industrialise our domestic economy.

“Thank you once again for honoring our invitation to be part of a large crowd of witnesses to this very important event”,