

SPEECH

By

Hon. Isak Katali

Minister of Mines and Energy

Launch of the First Energy Shop

Mariental

13 June 2011

Director of Ceremonies

Honourable Governor

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Regional Councillors

Captains of Industry

Distinguished guests

All Protocol observed,

Members of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this grand occasion where we are officially launching the first Energy Shop supported by the Ministry of Mines and Energy.

I am personally elated by this ceremony because it is a result of years of planning, discussions and negotiations to figure out how best to deliver decentralised but appropriate renewable energy technologies to marginalised areas in line with the mandate of the Ministry to promote, facilitate and regulate the responsible development and sustainable utilization of Namibia's

energy resources. Ladies and gentlemen, what better way to do this than meet here in the town of Mariental in the Hardap Region.

Distinguished guests, the idea of establishing Energy Shops was muted way back in 2006 with the design and launch of the Off-grid Energisation Master Plan in 2007. The underlying objective of the Master Plan is to provide access to appropriate energy technologies to everyone living or working in off-grid, pre-grid and “grey” areas. To those not aware of some of the terminology here, “off-grid areas” are those areas that would not have access to electricity within 20 years. “Pre-grid areas” are those areas that would not have access to electricity within 10 years while “grey areas” are locations where it is still not clear how and when access to electricity will be provided. Examples of grey areas include;

- (1) informal settlements -- where the majority of the inhabitants either do not have access to electricity or clearly cannot afford it, and
- (2) farm worker settlements on commercial farms – although the farm owner may have access to electricity, the farm worker families most often do not.

The Master Plan will, therefore, focus on providing informal settlements with access to energy.

The launch of the Off-grid Energy Master Plan, just like all other endeavours my Ministry is undertaking, are supported by a Policy Framework in the form of the White Paper on Energy Policy of 1998. The Energy Policy clearly states the “Government will promote the use of economically viable renewable technologies, as a complement to grid electrification, to improve energy provision to rural areas with a funding being made available for rural electrification through grid and off-grid energy supply options, on the basis of their relative social and economic costs and benefits.

Ladies and gentleman, you are all aware that Namibia is blessed with excellent renewable energy resources such as solar which undoubtedly are some of the best in the world. Despite the abundance of these resources, access to energy by the majority of Namibians still remains a pipe dream, more than 20 years into our independence. The establishment of Energy Shops is one way of increasing access to energy, primarily, in off-grid areas. The plan is to establish energy shops within a reasonable distance of the targeted communities. The primary function of the energy shops is to stock and sell suitable, approved energy products and compatible appliances. Emphasis would be placed on energy technologies and appliances that utilise renewable energy and energy efficiency. The energy shops would also serve as information centres for a

national off-grid energy financing mechanism. Some of you are probably aware that on 21 April 2011 we re-launched the Solar Revolving Fund which is a financing mechanism to support the affordability of renewable energy technologies. The Solar Revolving Fund is administered by my Ministry.

Under the Off-grid Energisation Master, we recommend a broad range of energy technologies and appliances to be stocked and sold through energy shops. Suitable energy technologies and appliances would be available to households and businesses of all income levels. The Master Plan would furthermore recommend energy baskets, so that off-grid customers are presented with a complete energy solution.

I emphasise the word recommend here because the Ministry is not establishing Energy Shops but is facilitating these shops which are owned by private entrepreneurs. The role of the Energy Shop, therefore, is amongst other things to:

- Stock and sell selected energy supplies
- Take and process customers' orders for energy technologies and baskets
- Recharge customers' 12V batteries for a fee using the SHS provided by the Master Plan

- Consult with customers regarding their revolving fund loan applications
- Assist customers to hire a certified solar installer when needed.

In addition to providing local informal settlement households with access to appropriate energy technologies, the initial energy shops would also provide access to rural settlers who are able to travel to the urban centres. Some of the appliances stocked in the Energy Shops include wood efficient stove, solar panels, liquefied petroleum gas, and solar lanterns.

In the same vein, my Ministry will support the Energy Shop through;

- Comprehensive staff training and refresher staff training
- Product catalogues and brochures
- Regional awareness-raising, and
- Funding, where required.

The roll out of the Energy Shops is a 20 year plan with 1 energy shop being established in each region during the first year which is starting today. The focus for year 1 is on urban, informal settlement areas. From year two onwards, the focus on establishing new energy shops would be spreading

outwards to rural areas. In the process the Ministry will always work with Regional Councils in identifying and supporting the Energy Shops.

Distinguished guests, the success of this programme cannot and will not be attributed to my Ministry alone, but to a collective effort by various stakeholders. I must mention here the important roles being played by two institutions in this programme. The Renewable Energy and Energy efficiency Institute at the Polytechnic of Namibia is coordinating this programme. This institute was created by my Ministry and the Polytechnic of Namibia to support the development of sustainable energy in Namibia.

I would like to commend the Embassy of Finland for the financial support they are providing for the establishment and capacitating of the Energy Shops. On behalf of all Namibians we are thankful of all the generous support Namibia is continuously receiving from the Government of Finland. I would have failed my duty by not mentioning the support we are currently receiving in the Directorate of Mining and the review of the White on Energy Policy which will commence soon.

I would also like to thank Mariental Building Supplies for taking up the offer to be the first Energy Shop, not only in the Hardap Region but in the entire country. I must state that together we can achieve the ultimate goal of increasing access to sustainable energy in the country.