

**Remarks by H.E. Kevin J. McGuire, U.S. Ambassador at the
Signing of the First Amendment of the
Limited Scope Grant Agreement between USAID and
the Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Employment Creation
September 10, 2003**

Honorable Minister, Nahas Angula
Dr. Tjama Tjivikua, Rector of the Polytechnic of Namibia
Mr. Lloyd Camp, Training Manager, Wilderness Safaris Namibia
Other distinguished guests...

Today we celebrate the formation of two new alliances, both of which will support the development and strengthening of workforce skills in the tourism sector. Through this document, which I am pleased to sign with Minister Angula, the U.S. government is providing 340,000 U.S. dollars to support these alliances, an amount that will be at least matched by the contributions of the Namibian private sector and U.S. universities.

The first alliance will be led by the Polytechnic of Namibia, and supported by two U.S. institutions, Winrock International and MDC Incorporated, as well as several U.S. institutions of higher learning. Its purpose will be to assist the Polytechnic to strengthen the quality of instruction at its new hotel school. Possible activities under the alliance include exchanges of students and faculty with the U.S. partners, scholarships for Namibian students, and activities to promote more active linkages between the hotel school and the Namibian tourism industry.

The second alliance will train people from various rural communities as eco-tourist guides, and will involve the Namibian Nature Foundation, and Wilderness Safaris Namibia. Participants in the program will learn about wildlife, the diversity and wonder of the natural environment, the principles of eco-tourism, and how to serve as effective and safe guides. The alliance will also support the development of minimum standards and qualifications at different levels of professional guiding, so that visitors to Namibia are assured of a quality experience.

The alliances will complement Namibia's community-based natural resource management program, led by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, and supported by USAID and a number of non-governmental organizations. Twenty-nine rural conservancies are now registered, resulting in improved environmental management to 18 million hectares of beautiful Namibian landscape. Through improved wildlife management, game numbers have surged dramatically.

The potential for ecotourism in these areas is just now being realized. With tourism projected to grow at 6 percent per year over the next several years, and tourism a force multiplier when it comes to employment generation, the sector has enormous potential for generating broad based economic growth. For the sector to realize its potential, trained manpower will be essential. Our hope is that both of these programs will make an important contribution toward the development of institutions and organizations that can provide the sort of training needed on a self-sustaining basis.

I would like to congratulate the Polytechnic, Wilderness Safaris Namibia, and other alliance partners, for their foresight and commitment to these partnerships. We clearly recognize that you are investing your own resources, in tandem with those of the U.S. government, for programs that will serve your own organizational interests, but as well, the interests of a growing Namibia.

I would also like to express my deep appreciation for the vision and support provided to this and other USAID programs by Minister Angula. We are fortunate to have such a strong and active development partner.

Please accept my best wishes for the success of these exciting cooperative ventures -- I look forward to hearing about your progress.

Thank you.