Namibia Civil Society Support Programme

To: The Editor,

Launch of the Namibia Civil Society Support Programme
Thursday 13 June 2013, 08.30, Polytechnic Hotel School

You are hereby invited to attend the official launch of the Namibia Civil Society Support Programme (NCSSP) at the above time and place. The NCSSP is a three year intervention, the financing agreement for which was signed between the European Union and the Government of the Republic of Namibia (represented by the National Planning Commission (NPC)) in early 2012. The overall aim of the programme is to strengthen civil society’s contribution to sustainable development and socio-economic justice. It comprises two components - support to the NANGOF Trust (NANGOFT) and support to a new organisation, the Civil Society Foundation of Namibia (CSFN). The Programme is funded by the European Union with approximately 48 Million NAD (4 Mill EUR).

Support to the NANGOFT:
The NANGOF Trust is the umbrella organisation for civil society organisations in Namibia. The NCSSP will reinforce the organisation’s role as the main civil society voice with Government, coordinating and strengthening the civil society advocacy agenda on key national issues. NCSSP support will also enable NANGOFT to:

- develop products and services for its members
- strengthen NANGOFT’s governance and network structures to improve member involvement
- improve cooperation between and among Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) locally and nationally
- strengthen information sharing among CSOs generally and particularly on important socio-economic justice issues and campaigns

Support to the CSFN:
The CSFN is a Trust that will generate, manage and disburse grants from a variety of donors for the benefit of civil society organisations. It will have a particular focus on grassroots organisations based outside the capital region. It was founded in August 2012 and aims to make a long-lasting contribution to civil society as a funds management vehicle. It will be nationally recognised and sufficiently strong to work with the largest agencies that support or could support civil society. It will also build a comprehensive picture of what civil society is doing across the regions and use this to promote support civil society work in tackling poverty, improving health and education standards, increasing knowledge and action in the fields of human rights, social justice and the environment. Its work will have two themes:

Funded by:
• Raising funds for CSO activities in Namibia: Immediate challenges will be to identify and develop donor sources for which the funding vehicle is suitable and to secure a partnership framework with government to secure GRN/civil society funding. Longer term challenges will be to develop new sources of funding that require the funding vehicle’s sector wide approach.

• Grant making: Small grant for CSOs will be a priority and applications for small grants programme, using N$1m allocated by the EU for this will be open from February 2014. Other grant arrangements that meet the different requirements of donors will also be developed.

People and organisations wishing to know more about how the CSFN will work can go to its website (www.csfnam.org).

Supporting CSFN work with technical assistance and funds for grants from the NCSSP, the Finnish Consulting Group International (FCG) has a three year contract with NPC. Thus, a third element of this event is the formal announcement of a Call for Proposals related to agriculture and rural development for CSOs working in Erongo, Hardap, Omaheke and Otjozondjupa Regions. A total of N$12.4m from the NCSSP has been earmarked for this first Call. Full details of the call can be found on the CSFN website (www.csfnam.org) after this NCSSP launch.

Notes for Editors:

Civil society plays a significant role in the development of Namibia’s democracy. Some 500+ active CSOs focus on development-related activities in health, education, the environment, local governance and development, human rights and justice and in the Arts. NSAs differ widely in terms of capacity and scope; many are hampered by institutional and human resource capacity constraints; many organisations rely on one individual. Strengthening this network is the focus of the NCSSP.

Foreign donor funding for the implementation of development initiatives is limited and falling. This is largely due to the re-classification of Namibia by the World Bank as an upper-middle income country. However, Namibia also has one of the greatest income inequalities in the world. Downscaling of donor programmes and withdrawal of donor and international NGO staff is observed in all sectors (including recent reductions in HIV/AIDS), other than in community based natural resource management.

Individual and corporate philanthropy in Namibia lag behind countries with comparable entrepreneurial and middle classes. There are few tax incentives for philanthropy, or private foundations. Private giving generally bypasses CSOs. There is little communication between the private and non-profit sectors. Scarcity of resources limits the scale of programmes which civil society can implement, discourages collaboration and makes it difficult to retain qualified staff. The launch of the NCSSP seeks to remedy these challenges.

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