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Statement by the MCA Namibia Chief Executive Officer on the Ratification of the MCA Namibia Compact

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I am delighted with the ratification of the MCA Namibia Compact. This is an important milestone in the development of the Programme which unlocks the way forward to implementation of the identified activities in our beneficiary sectors – education, tourism and agriculture. I am excited about the anticipated benefits for our:

- school-going children;
- tourism conservancy members;
- communal farmers in the Northern Communal areas; and
- women and those involved in the collection and processing of indigenous natural products.

During challenging moments in the negotiations with our American partners and during the equally challenging times here at home, responding to the many questions the Compact raised, I drew strength from what we collectively designed to be the MCA Namibia Program and its ability to contribute to economic growth in our poor communities. I strongly believe that the MCA Namibia will draw a significant number of poor Namibians into financially rewarding and sustainable economic activity.

Over the past month, the Government Negotiating Team under the able leadership of Mr. Frans Kapofi, Secretary to Cabinet, the Sector Teams for MCA Namibia and my team at MCA Namibia have all worked tirelessly to explain to the MP's and other decision-makers what MCA Namibia is and what it is not.

Our colleagues at the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the local MCC team continued to work with us in true partnership towards the signing of the Programme Implementation Agreement (PIA), the executive agreement that sets out the operational detail, and the Tax Agreement, also an executive agreement that details how taxes are treated under the Compact.

The public outcry in the media and by various political groups provided us with a platform to carefully explain the intended operational set-up for the implementation of the MCA Namibia Programme. While earlier we had briefed the media, the public and the regions on the content of the programme – the MCA Namibia Programme objective to reduce poverty through economic growth through public investments in education, tourism and agriculture – we may not have put in enough effort to explain the operational side of things. We are glad to now have had the opportunity to in detail share with the MPs – and through that process the media and the public at large – how the MCA Namibia Programme will be implemented. We are grateful to the MPs – both from the ruling party and the opposition – to have granted us their time and patience to make our representations.

Today's ratification of the Compact will allow me to mobilize the MCA Namibia Management Unit. I look forward to welcome, very soon, the first seven Namibian expert staff to join the Unit. They are the successful candidates recruited in Round 1 and 2. We will continue with Round 3 of recruitment as from next week and junior positions will be filled as from early 2009.

With ratification we start a period of 9-12 months called the Compact Implementation Funding period. During this time we will gear up for the full implementation of the Programme by:

- commissioning feasibility studies;
- contracting final design work;
- undertaking environmental impact assessments; and
- preparing the various tender packages for procurement.

Some 2-3% of the total Compact value will be available to us to finalize all the preparatory work for implementation as from the final quarter of 2009.

We will continue with our open door policy to allow the media but also members of the public to share their views and concerns with us. My team and I – with the help of our political leaders and senior Government officials – will answer your questions and address your concerns to the best of our ability.

Please consult our website – it is alive and regularly updated! – and contact me at our offices for any further questions or concerns.

I thank you.

Penny Akwenye