



*UNDP Resident Representative a.i. planting a seedling. UNDP*

## **Sustainable Land Management curbs desertification**

**Rehoboth, 27 June:** The Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MAWF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) co-hosted the commemoration of the World Day to Combat Desertification in Rehoboth on 27 June.

Desertification is one of the greatest environmental challenges of our time. It is the persistent degradation of dryland ecosystems by human activities – including unsustainable farming, mining, overgrazing and clear-cutting of land – and by climate change.

Speaking at the event, the Deputy Minister of the MET, Hon. Bernadette Jagger highlighted what Namibia is doing to address desertification. “Namibia has shown commitment to address desertification and land degradation through establishing the Sustainable Land Management Steering Committee, consisting of stakeholders from line ministries and private institutions”, she said.

In parts of the country, cattle farming and agriculture farming in a semi-arid area offers us a small-scale version of the challenges facing the wider country. Frequently, overgrazing and low rainfall, which replenishes plant life, are common in these areas, which leads to issues of desertification and land degradation.

The UNDP Resident Representative a.i., Izumi Morota-Alakija stated that Namibia, with support from the UN System, is also implementing clear policy directives, including supporting the mainstreaming of climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and food and livelihood security into development planning.

Morota-Alakija further stated that Namibia, with the support of UNDP and the Global Environment Facility, is addressing land degradation and desertification with sustainable land management (SLM) through projects such as the Sustainable Management of Namibia’s Forested Lands (Nafola) project.

Sustainable Land Management (SLM) is defined as, “the use of land resources, including soils, water, animals and plants, for the production of goods to meet changing human needs, while simultaneously ensuring the long-term productive potential of these resources and the maintenance of their environmental functions”.

The Nafola project aims to maintain current dry forests and the ecosystem goods and services in 13 community forests, covering over 2.8 million hectares of forest lands. The project increases the productivity of drylands ecosystems while simultaneously reducing deforestation, securing the global environmental and national development benefits delivered by forest resources.

As part of the commemoration, over 200 seedlings were donated by the MAWF to the Rehoboth Town Council and several were planted at the event. Planting seedlings in dry areas is a way of restoring deserts or rocky regions and combating climate change, as trees absorb excess carbon dioxide while releasing oxygen back into the air. Rehoboth is one of the driest towns in Namibia and planting the seedlings were in an effort to curb desertification in the town.

Hochland and Rehoboth High schools performed as part of the commemoration, and there was an exhibition for participants, students and community members to learn more about desertification and drought and to highlight methods of preventing it as well as how to recover from drought. The exhibition included showcases by MAWF, UNDP, MET as well as the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia.