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Gerus – Mururani Gate Power Line Environmental Impact Assessment

Minutes of the Otavi Focus Group Meeting 19 June 2006, 3pm at Khorab Safari Lodge

Preface to the Minutes

NamPower proposes to construct a new 350 kV HVDC power line from Gerus Substation (north of Otjiwarongo) to Mururani Gate. Eco.plan is undertaking an Environmental Assessment for this project. This document contains the minutes of the focus group meeting held in Otavi, on the 19th June 2006. Detailed information about the project was presented by Eco.plan.

1. Welcome & Introduction

The farmer and land owners potentially affected by the power line were welcomed and appreciation for their attendance was expressed.

The following members of the project team were present at the meeting: -

- Charlene Wrigley (CW) Project Manager & Environmental Scientist with Eco.plan –responsible for the Environmental Assessment.
- Pal Strauss (PS) NamPower – Technical Team
- Johan Stadler (JS) NamPower – Technical Team.
- Gideon D. van de Berg (GvdB) NamPower – Technical Team
- Gloudina De Beer (GB) NamPower – Environmental Management Department

2. Attendance

An attendance list for the meeting is attached.

3. Purpose of the meeting

The purpose of the meeting is as follows: -

- a) Introduce the project and background,
- b) Present the technical aspects of the powerline,
- c) Explain the route selection and Environmental Assessment Process (incl. Public Participation),
- d) Discuss Environmental Aspects associated with the proposed powerline, and
- e) Hear & record 13 AP's concerns.

4. Rationale for the Project & Technical Requirements

The need for the power line arises out of NamPower's planning process to meet the future power demand needs in Namibia. The hydro power station at Ruacana generates about half of Namibia's power, while the rest is currently imported from South Africa. The growing demand in South Africa is expected to use up their surplus power generation capacity around the year 2007. As a result of the future shortage in power supply, Namibia is looking to alternative power sources.

Various alternatives have been assessed in order to address the future power supply shortage. It is expected that the proposed Kudu Gas power station at Oranjemund will be operational around 2009. Kudu Gas will supply sufficient power for Namibia's needs for 20 years or more with spare capacity to export some of its power. The Kudu Gas power station will be suitable for generating the base load requirements, while Ruacana (like most hydro power stations) is able to vary its power output rapidly and is therefore very suitable to supply peak demand periods (e.g. early evening is a peak demand period).

The proposed Gerus - Mururani Gate power line is intended to meet the following objectives:

- o To provide the necessary bulk transmission infrastructure to transport power from the new and existing sources of generation to areas where it is needed;
- o To strengthen the Namibian national power grid, and ensure stability of supply to areas of consumption;
- o To capture economic growth opportunities in northern Namibia by having sufficient transmission capacity available;
- o To make optimal use of resources to ensure lowest price to consumers;
- o Alternative energy sources are not always viably available, and therefore power lines and transmission are required in the region;
- o Strive to be self sufficient in power generation and transmission;
- o Aim to ensure efficient transmission of power with less energy losses;
- o The supplementation of power could lead to the potential of the exportation of power.

The proposed high voltage transmission line is intended for bulk transmission of power. It will not supply power directly to the communities through which they are routed because the voltage is too high for reticulation to individual consumers. The cost of sub-stations to transform this power to usable voltages is very high. Indirectly, however, by strengthening the national grid, it will be possible for utility companies to be supplied with power for distribution to consumers.

The Gerus-Mururani Gate power line forms part of a larger transmission power line. The power line route runs from Auas Sub-Station (near Windhoek) via Gerus Sub-Station (north of Otjiwarongo) via Rundu to Katima Mulilo. The EA has been conducted in three phases. The EA's are being conducted as follows:

- o **Phase 1:** Auas – Otjikoto – Lifa Transmission Line;
- o **Phase 2:** Gerus - Mururani Gate Transmission Line; and
- o **Phase 3:** Otjikoto - Katima Mulilo Transmission Line.

- Registration of Interested & Affected Parties to facilitate further communication,
- Distribution of a Scoping Report for comment (when the preferred alignment has been finalised),
- All concerns expressed will be recorded in the Scoping Report, and
- The Environmental Assessment Report will be made available in public libraries, and by e-mail (on request).

6. The Environmental Assessment (EA)

The environmental assessment considers the environment in both the bio-physical and socio-economic environments.

The EA process will include the following: -

- Three phases:
 - Phase 1: Route Evaluation/Scoping to find the best route corridor and to map the environmental aspects at a scale of 1:250 000. There will be consultations with the public and the authorities and a Scoping Report will be produced
 - Phase 2: Environmental Assessment of the preferred route and mapping at a scale of 1: 50 000. The final EA report will be produced
 - Phase 3: An Environmental Management Plan for construction and operation will be drawn up and include Environmental Specifications that will be set out in contractual documents,
- Input from the PPP will help to define the scope of the investigations for EA;
- Various specialist studies include ecological (flora) - Ben Strohbach, ornithological - Mr. Chris van Rooyen and archaeological - Dr. John Kinahan;
- The impacts identified will be assessed in terms of the geographical extent, duration, intensity, probability of occurrence, and the significance of the impact to a decision on whether to approve the project;
- Ways to mitigate potential impacts will be investigated and discussed with the technical team, and
- An EA Report will be compiled and submitted to MET (Ministry of Environment & Tourism) for approval.

7. Questions, Issues & Concerns

This part of the meeting was prefaced with the remarks that: -

- This meeting is intended to inform the 13 AP's, farmers and land owners about the project, and to hear and record the issues and concerns of the farmers,
- No decisions would be taken at this meeting, and
- All issues raised would be noted so that they could be taken into account in the planning process.

Questions, Issues & Concerns:

Q: Are there any other 350 kV lines currently in Namibia?

A: Currently there are no other 350 kV lines, there are however two 400 kV lines.

Q: Why is it a Direct Current (DC) Transmission Line?

A: Direct Current Transmission lines are the cheapest way to transport electricity. Less losses of electricity occur with a Direct Current Transition line. The alternative is to transport through alternating current. There are little physical differences between AC and DC.

Q: Why is the line going to Gerus?

A: There will be a tie-in from Windhoek upwards and at Gerus the line will be split to go north and east.

Q: Are there any existing lines in this area?

A: Yes there are.

Q: Then why not use the old lines?

A: The lines do not currently exist where we need them and in some cases, they do not exist at all. In addition, considering the technology that is being used, it is best to transport the electricity straight from Otjiwarongo to Katima, since this will be the easiest option for NamPower in terms of distance and the DC technology.

Q: From the maps it appears that the line will cross an area used by me for hunting. The power line construction is going to disturb the game, resulting in them staying away from the area for some time. The power line construction also makes it easier for poachers to access the farm. The servitudes are often used as short cuts for people walking across the farm. It is also close to my house and might even cross runways and it crosses an area used by vultures for feeding. How is this possible from all you have explained?

A: During the helicopter survey pans, runways and depressions were looked for, but your comments will be noted and addressed during final route selection by specialist investigators.
(According to the farmer in question, it was possible to have missed the runway from the air because it might have been difficult to see the runway due to its location as it is next to grazing land and was planted with grazing grass previously).

Q: I have a farm that I lease out. It has a NamWater pipeline which runs across the farm. There is very little control on that line in terms of the gates and locks. Road authority also caused a fire there recently. I also have a problem with communicating the issues to the relevant people. I would like a responsible person to contact if farmers have an issue, a name and a number. How can you insure that I will not have the same problems with NamPower?

A: A note has been made about your concerns and will be addressed in the final report to ensure proper communication between you and NamPower.
(Pal Strauss went on to explain the NamPower procedure which regulates the control of the gates and who is responsible for the gates during what stage of the project. The farmer concluded by saying that he still has a problem with communication and who is responsible for what and that he would like the issue addressed in the final report).

Comment:

The owner of Omarasa has a problem with too many disturbances on his farm and too many people have access to his farm as it is. He is fearful of the fact that they might serve as informants to other criminal elements that will lead to losses on his part. He is thus adamant that he does not want the power line on his farm.

8. Way Forward & Closure

All those who attended the meeting were thanked for their time, interest and their contribution to the discussions. For those who could not attend, this is not the only opportunity to contribute to the process.

- Minutes will be circulated to all registered Interested & Affected Parties (I&APs),
- Written submissions to Eco.plan are welcome, and
- Eco.plan will advertise the availability of the Scoping Report when it is ready for comment.