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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**BANK OF NAMIBIA LAUNCHES MODIFIED N\$ 20 AND N\$ 200 IN KUNENE AND OMUSATI REGIONS**

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1. On the 20th and 21st of February 2023, the Bank of Namibia officially launched the modified N\$ 20 and N\$ 200 banknotes into circulation in Opuwo, Kunene Region and Outapi, Omusati Region, respectively, under the theme "Know Your Currency."
2. Officiating the event, the Governor of the Bank, Mr. Johannes !Gawaxab highlighted the importance of banknotes and the replenishment thereof stating "It is important to remember that physical money is the lifeblood of our economy and more so in our rural areas. Just like our bodies need a steady supply of blood to function properly, our economy needs a steady supply of currency to keep transactions flowing smoothly".
3. In terms of section 40 (1) of the Bank of Namibia Act, Act 1 of 2020 as amended, the Bank of Namibia updated the security features on the modified N\$20 and N\$ 200 banknotes to effect the change of the Governor's signature. The depiction of the signature of the current Governor of a central bank on a banknote is an industry practice that primarily aids the public in identifying the banknotes and their legitimacy. Since the Namibian dollar was initially issued in September 1993, !Gawaxab is the fifth central bank Governor whose signature appears on the currency. In 2022, the Bank introduced and released the modified N\$ 10 banknote with the same features.
4. In his address, during the launch of the N\$20 banknote in Opuwo, the Governor echoed the role of the Bank as far as financial inclusion and participation of all Namibians in the economy. "Launching this banknote today signals our commitment to promoting the inclusion of all Namibians in our economy by increasing their participation and expanding opportunities. In line with our mandate, financial inclusion is high among the Bank's shared roles and priorities in advancing the responsiveness of the financial sector and contributing to the inclusive growth of the economy."

5. Namibia remains predominantly a cash-based economy, particularly in semi-urban and rural areas. In 2022, the Bank injected a total of **N\$2.3 billion** new banknotes into circulation, whilst the total currency in circulation recorded as at end of December 2022 stood at **N\$4.8 billion**. Equally worth noting is that, over the past few years, the Bank has observed a steady growth in the demand for currency. “It is evident from this that many of our people continue to use cash (coins and banknotes) as the primary form of payment in settling their transactions, conducting their business activities, and meeting social obligations. And it is equally our priority to ensure that banknotes and coins are accessible, durable, recognisable, and easily authenticated”, the Governor further indicated.
6. Launching the N\$200 banknote in Outapi, Governor !Gawaxab reiterated the Bank of Namibia’s commitment to financial inclusion agenda of all Namibians stating that “For our people to benefit and participate productively in the economy, we need to find ways of bridging the digital divide, as the cost of financial exclusion is far too great and one that we can ill afford”.
7. The Bank has experienced a meteoric rise in electronic money, often known as E-money (wallet services as part of payment services offered by both banks and non-banks). Presently, there are approximately 2.5 million active wallets, with 64 million transactions totalling N\$34 billion by 2022. The Bank of Namibia has also introduced the Basic Bank Account, a regulated product that mandates all commercial banks to provide a low-cost product to the general population, as well as other digital financial services. Notwithstanding substantial progress towards financial inclusion, the Governor acknowledged that many Namibians, especially those living in rural regions, suffer major impediments to gaining access to financial services.
8. To address this disparity in accessibility, the Governor said that the Bank is examining alternatives that would promote innovation by making payment systems and products interoperable and therefore reducing transaction costs. “Access will also be expanded, particularly in rural areas and the informal economy”, he further stated.
9. A comprehensive, multi-media national awareness campaign has begun to familiarise the public with this new currency. The public is encouraged to constantly "Look, Feel, and Tilt" banknotes in order to identify the security elements. Subsequent to the launch, the Bank’s management officially issued the banknote into circulation at the Kunene open market and the Outapi community market.



Issued by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Garises'.

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