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Attention: The News Editor

MEDIA RELEASE

NCRST Establishes the Biosafety Council

The National Commission on Research, Science and Technology (NCRST) has under section 5 of the Biosafety Act No. 7, 2006 established the Biosafety Council and has today appointed the following Council members as experts in the fields of environmental issues; public health issues - including food hygiene and food safety; animal health and welfare or other related agricultural issues; molecular biology; or law:

Animal Health & Welfare	:	Dr Herbert Schneider
Environmental Issues	:	Mr Teofilus M Nghitila
Law	:	Mr Etuna Josua
Molecular Biology	:	Dr Martha Kandawa-Schulz
Public Health / Food Safety	:	Dr Ronnie A Bock

The NCRST is in the process of implementing the Biosafety Act in pursuance of the objectives that are in line with the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, a subsidiary protocol of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

The objectives of the Biosafety Act are: to introduce a system and procedures for the regulation of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in Namibia, in order to provide an adequate level of protection to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, taking into account, potential risks to the health and safety of humans and potential harmful consequences to the environment that could be posed by GMOs or genetically modified products; and social, cultural, ethical and economic considerations.

Provided that lack of scientific knowledge due to insufficient relevant scientific information or scientific consensus should not be interpreted as indicating a particular level of risk, or absence of risk, or an acceptable risk; and to provide a framework for responsible research, development and the use of genetic engineering and to manage the potential risks posed by or as a result of gene technology by regulating activities

involving the development, production, use, import, export, transport, release into the environment, marketing and other uses of GMOs and genetically modified products.

“We welcome on board the newly appointed members of the Biosafety Council and encourage you all to work diligently and proactively towards fulfilling your mandate in the next three years ahead.” said Prof Andre du Pisani, Chairperson of the National Commission on Research, Science and Technology during inaugural meeting of the Biosafety Council members at the NCRST Head Office in Windhoek

One of the immediate tasks of the Biosafety Council is to finalise the Regulations to the Biosafety Act. This process would include consultation of stakeholders. Upon finalisation of the Regulations, both the Regulations and the commencement date will be gazetted. The Commencement date gazette will also indicate the starting date that GMOs will be regulated through the Biosafety Act. While this process is on-going, the NCRST is setting up the administrative unit to deal with the regulation of GMOs in Namibia.

Ends:

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