

**STATEMENT BY HON. NETUMBO NANDI-NDAITWAH,
MP, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE
REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA, TO THE 23RD SESSION OF THE
AFRICAN UNION EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ON THE ITEM
“STRENGTHENING AFRICAN LEADERSHIP OF THE
PROCESS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO
COMBAT DESERTIFICATION (ITEM PROPOSED BY
BURKINA FASO)” EX.CL/801(XXIII)**

Your Excellency Dr. Tedros Adhanom, Chairperson of the African Union Executive Council and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,

Your Excellencies Ministers of Foreign Affairs,

Your Excellency Dr Nkhosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission,

Invited Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I wish to express Namibia's appreciation to the representative of Burkina Faso, for the presentation on the item on strengthening Africa's leadership in the process of the UN Convention to combat desertification. Namibia fully supports African efforts

to influence the focus and direction of the negotiations of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

2. It is in this context that, Namibia will host the 11th Conference of Parties (COP11) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) from 16-26 September 2013 in Windhoek.
3. Namibia is fully committed to regional, continental and international efforts aimed at combating desertification. Given the rapid rate of desertification and the far reaching implications of land degradation in Africa, the initiative by Burkina Faso provides further impetus for addressing this issue. In order to add a stronger African voice to COP11, Namibia wishes to invite all AU Member States to participate in great numbers and effectively at this crucial Conference, and ensure that the outcomes benefit Africa as a whole.
4. I also call upon the African Union Commission to be actively engaged in mobilizing support, and make inputs in the themes during the preparations for COP11.
5. Mr Chairperson,

6. Africa's total support and commitment will help Namibia to make COP 11 a resounding African success.

I thank you.