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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **India seeks Namibia's partnership for re-introduction of Cheetahs into India's wilds**

A 5-member delegation from India, comprising senior officials and experts from Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, the state of Madhya Pradesh, and Wildlife Institute of India visited Namibia from 18<sup>th</sup> February to 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2022 to hold bilateral talks regarding sourcing a few Cheetahs from Namibia for relocation into their historical range and wild habitat in India.

The delegation held G2G-level talks with senior officials from Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism. They also called on Hon. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations & Cooperation. The experts visited Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) and held scientific and technical discussions with them regarding the project. They also had interaction with Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi, Speaker of National Assembly and Madame Jane Katjavivi, patrons of CCF.

Cheetah is the only large carnivore which had gone extinct from India in the past. With strong commitment towards environmental conservation post independence, India has enacted stringent laws against hunting and poaching, and also undertaken large-scale biodiversity conservation efforts. With about 3,000 wild tigers, India is today home to over 60% of world's Tiger-population and has already achieved in 2018 the St. Petersburg Declaration's target of doubling tiger-population, four years ahead of schedule. The conservation efforts regarding Asiatic Lions in India have resulted in their numbers rising from less than 50 at the turn of last century to about 700 today.

Namibia, with its large number of free-ranging Cheetahs, is called "Cheetah capital of the world". With a view to now re-introduce Cheetahs into Indian wild in a scientifically-planned and carefully-monitored manner, the Government of India had approached the Government of Republic of Namibia last year and requested for support in sending a few Cheetahs from Namibia to India.

High Commissioner of India H.E. Mr Prashant Agrawal said, "This would be a wonderful friendly gesture by Namibia in a year when India is marking 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence, and these Cheetahs would be no less than Namibia's goodwill Ambassadors in India. India is prepared and ready, and we are hopeful of achieving this by mid-2022. While partnering with our close friend Namibia on this important project, which would be a historical landmark in global conservation efforts,

we wish to build on bilateral collaboration on environmental protection and biodiversity conservation, and make it a key part of our strong and diverse multi-dimensional relationship with Namibia.”

Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh has been identified as first site for the project. Necessary preparations and resource allocation in this regard have been done by authorities and this 748 sq. km. large site with no human settlement is ready for introduction of Cheetahs with minimal inputs. Some other sites examined by experts have also been found highly suitable and their restorative management is underway for future use. The Action Plan for this project could be accessed at [https://wii.gov.in/cheeta\\_introduction](https://wii.gov.in/cheeta_introduction)

**Windhoek**

**22 February 2022**

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