

## Namibia and Turkey sign trade cooperation agreement



WINDHOEK – Namibia and Turkey yesterday signed an agreement on trade and economic cooperation that has been on the table for about two years and was finally concluded last month.

The agreement, which was signed by Minister of Trade and Industry, Calle Schlettwein and Deniz Cakar, Turkey’s ambassador to Namibia, is expected to result in enhanced trade facilitation, market access and could eventually include reduced visa requirements between the two countries.

Turkey opened an official resident embassy in Namibia two years ago and has established an implementing office for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in Namibia.

“This agreement will bring the business circles of the two countries together. This is only the first step of the relationship of which the second step will be joint economic cooperation that will endeavour to bring business people of the two countries face to face. There is quite a lot that Turkey can offer Namibia and there is a lot that Turkey needs from Namibia,” commented Ambassador Cakar during the signing ceremony at the Ministry of Trade and Industry in the capital.

“Today we live in a global village and everybody needs each other,” noted Cakar on the agreement, which is the fifth cooperation agreement the two countries have signed in a span of two months.

The ambassador added that she hopes the agreement will encourage more Turkish investors to come to Namibia and more Namibian businesspeople to delve into the Turkish market, which is comprised of 76 million people.

According to Schlettwein, the agreement hopes to satisfy the needs of both countries and he anticipates deeper cooperation in the areas of tourism, airlines and airport development. This cooperation, said Schlettwein, will assist Namibia in positioning herself as a logistics hub in the region.

“All logistics hubs that are successful have linked the three transport modes of air, land and sea,” he said.

“We must significantly improve our ability to link airlines and aviation services and that is why we have taken a principle decision to revamp Hosea Kutako International Airport and the Walvis Bay Airport. However, we need agreements with airlines to fly directly into these airports,” remarked Schlettwein.

Both the minister and the ambassador have identified tourism as one of the areas of cooperation that holds the greatest potential.

In fact, a delegation of Turkish travel agencies is expected in Namibia towards the end of November to gauge the tourism potential in the country.

“There is still much work that has to be done and we hope that this agreement will specifically improve Namibia’s productive capacity to increase trade in finished (value-added) goods on both sides,” continued Schlettwein.

The minister added that agreements of this nature improve Namibia’s market access throughout the world and enable government to promote the country as a gateway to SADC and as an ideal destination to establish manufacturing businesses.

Schlettwein also pointed out some similarities between Turkey and Namibia, such as inflation of around six percent, unemployment and income inequality. “These similarities and challenges make us ideal partners,” he noted.

Trade between Namibia and Turkey is currently very limited both in terms of volume and value. Namibia currently exports seal products to Turkey while some Turkish investors have opened a diamond cutting facility and a charcoal company in Namibia