

## AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

### Namibia Monthly Briefing June 2020

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#### Namibia Summary 23 June 2020

**President Hage Geingob (2015-present) re-imposes full (stage 1) coronavirus lockdown for Erongo Region as the rest of Namibia moves to stage 3. Opposition members of parliament heckle Geingob's sixth annual State of the Nation Address. The Bank of Namibia (central bank) cuts its interest rate to 4.0%. The budget deficit and public debt are set to soar in the 2020/21 fiscal year, but there will be no new taxes in the short term. Inflation rises to 2.1% in May.**

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#### Erongo goes back into full lockdown after more Covid-19 cases

In a major setback to **Namibia's** lockdown exit strategy, President **Hage Geingob** (2015-present) felt obliged to re-impose full **Covid-19** lockdown (stage 1) in **Erongo Region** on 8 June.<sup>1</sup> This came just over a week after he had announced on 29 May that the whole country – barring **Walvis Bay** local authority area, which was put back to stage 1 because of two new, concurrent Covid-19 cases – would move to stage 3 from 1 June for 28 days. Geingob warned that the virus had not yet been defeated, as new cases continued to be reported. As of 22 June, the total number of confirmed Covid-19 cases in Namibia had climbed to 63, with eight new ones, according to the online **Worldometer** daily coronavirus update, with no recorded deaths.<sup>2</sup>

Geingob said residents had been observed not adhering to lockdown measures, resulting in a high risk for community spread in Walvis Bay and surrounding towns, necessitating more stringent measures to keep infections localised. Geingob said that extensive testing was to be conducted in the area surrounding the known cases, since “*prompt and targeted, localised interventions*” are seen as the best way of avoiding the need to re-impose a stage 1 national lockdown.<sup>3</sup> Geingob formally opened two Covid-19 treatment units on 5 June, one a nine-bed high dependence facility, the second a ten-bed isolation facility, both within **Windhoek Central Hospital**.<sup>4</sup>

Under stage 3, some business premises have been able to re-open and the sale of alcohol is permitted again, but only during the daytime and by take-away purchases from licensed premises. Even under stage 3, entry points to Namibia continue to be closed and the restriction on cross-border movements remains in place. Geingob told a specially-convened press conference in **Windhoek** that although “*we are managing the coronavirus in Namibia*”, mitigating Covid-19 infections required “*dynamic interventions to suppress exponential spread of the disease*”.<sup>5</sup>

#### Opposition MPs heckle Geingob's state of the nation address

In another sign that normal political life is resuming after a two-month hiatus, Geingob's sixth annual state of the nation address (SONA), received a rude reception from opposition members of parliament (MPs) in the **National Assembly (NA)** on 4 June.<sup>6</sup> Early into his speech, Geingob walked off the podium and sat down after opposition MPs interrupted his address, following his statement that the

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<sup>1</sup> Statement by Dr Hage G. Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, on the Imposition of Stage 1 restrictions to the

<sup>2</sup> Worldometer (online), COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic.

<sup>3</sup> The Presidency, Statement by His Excellency the President Dr Hage G Geingob at a Media Briefing on a Partial Lifting of the Lockdown Restrictions, 30 Apr 2020;

<sup>4</sup> World Health Organisation (WHO), Geneva, 16 Jun 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Statement by Dr Hage G Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, on the Imposition of Stage 1 restrictions to the Erongo Region, 8 Jun 2020.

<sup>6</sup> New Era, 5 Jun 2020, The Namibian, 5 Jun 2020.

government had been successful in limiting corruption. Geingob highlighted the cancellation of an inflated **Hosea Kutako International Airport (HKIA)** upgrading tender with a **Chinese** firm, stating:

*"All forms of corruption are destructive and regrettably continue to taint our country. Contrary to erroneous perceptions, we do not lack the political will to fight corruption."*<sup>7</sup>

Geingob also said the government had not interfered in the unfolding fishing industry corruption ('fishrot') scandal which has put two former cabinet ministers in prison facing various fraud charges. Opposition MPs held up posters protesting the scandal.<sup>8</sup> **Popular Democratic Movement (PDM)** MP **Vipua Muharukua** commented:

*"We are a democratic state where the government has the right to say its say. That's why we sit in chambers to hear what the government has to say. Similarly, the government has an obligation to hear the cries of the opposition."*<sup>9</sup>

The PDM is the official opposition in parliament, with 16 seats, as opposed to the 63 (out of 96 elected MPs), held by the ruling **South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO Party of Namibia)**.

Former fisheries minister **Bernhard Esau** and justice minister **Sacky Shanghala** were arrested in November for allegedly receiving kickbacks worth up to N\$2.5 billion (\$170m) for granting **Icelandic** fishing company **Samherji** unfettered access to Namibia's lucrative horse mackerel resource (see *ARC Briefing Namibia November, December 2019*). Geingob said he had requested the implicated ministers to respond to allegations of corruption during 2018 before they were forced to resign in 2019. He commented:

*"Their responses were subsequently forwarded to the **Anti-Corruption Commission [of Namibia]** for investigation, consistent with my conviction to strengthen processes, systems and institutions... today, two senior former ministers are in jail for seven months, with no interference from the executive."*<sup>10</sup>

On broader themes, Geingob reflected on the achievements of the five-year **Harambee Prosperity Plan** launched in 2015 to accelerate the implementation of the government's developmental plans and projects. Geingob highlighted a sharp decline in poverty; while acknowledging concern over the high rate of unemployment, he noted that the local economy created over 48,000 jobs between 2016 and 2018:

*"We believe poverty should not be managed, but eradicated through effective tools such as economic empowerment and employment creation ... the status quo is not sustainable, and emphasis falls on stimulating job-generation and economic growth."*<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, **Landless People's Movement (LPM)** leader **Bernadus Swartbooi** has suggested that a basic income grant (BIG) of N\$750 (\$43) should be introduced for the next 24 months to cushion the impact of Covid-19 on the less privileged. The LPM sees the N\$562m (\$30m) provided by the government in April for emergency income grants as paving the way for a permanent BIG. The emergency grant was a once-off payment for Namibians who lost their jobs in both the formal and informal sectors (see *ARC Briefing Namibia April 2020*). Swartbooi commented:

*"This will live up to the ministers' stated goals to 'save lives, save livelihoods, save incomes' and thereby generate demand in the total economy."*<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> New Era, 5 Jun 2020, The Namibian, 5 Jun 2020.

<sup>8</sup> The Namibian, 5 Jun 2020.

<sup>9</sup> The Namibian, 5 Jun 2020.

<sup>10</sup> New Era, 5 Jun 2020.

<sup>11</sup> New Era, 5 Jun 2020.

<sup>12</sup> New Era, 4 Jun 2020.

## Central bank cuts repo rate again...

The **Bank of Namibia (BoN)** (central bank) cut its key repurchase (repo) rate by a further 25 basis points (bps) to an historic low of 4.0% at its **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** meeting on 17 June.<sup>13</sup> This still left Namibia's repo rate 50 bps higher than that of **South Africa**, the first time the two countries' interest rates had diverged since March 2016, when Namibia's was 25 bps lower. On 21 May the **South African Reserve Bank (SARB)** had cut its repo rate by a further 50 bps to 3.75%, but the BoN did not immediately follow this action, for reasons not entirely clear at the time. This was in contrast to March, when to counter the initial economic impact of the Covid-19 lockdown, the BoN followed the SARB's lead in slashing its repo rate by 100 basis points at a special MPC meeting held the day after the SARB's regular MPC meeting (see *ARC Briefing Namibia March 2020*). There was no explanation as to why the BoN did not cut its rate by the full 50 bps this time either. However, by implementing a smaller cut, the central bank has left scope for further rating action if the economy contracts by more than is currently estimated. It also reduces the prospect of any capital outflow to South Africa by depositors, since interest rates remain slightly higher in Namibia. A further 25 bps decrease is quite likely to be made at the BoN's next rate setting meeting in August in ARC's view.

The rate cut was announced by BoN deputy governor **Ebson Uanguta**, presumably because the new governor **Johannes !Gawaxab** appointed by Geingob in April, only started at the beginning of June. !Gawaxab, a businessman, was reported as saying that in his view the central bank's mandate is about more than delivering on traditional priorities such as monetary policy and financial stability, but should also include fostering a prosperous economy. Some economic analysts have criticised the BoN, which is independent of the government, for following SARB monetary policies too closely. !Gawaxab commented:

*"I aim to look at how best do we complement the collaborations between the monetary policy and fiscal policy authorities to bring economic prosperity to Namibia."*<sup>14</sup>

In the BoN's Monetary Policy Statement (MPS), Uanguta said the central bank had to balance the need for further monetary policy stimulus in the face of the pandemic-induced weakness in the economy against the importance of not undermining sound savings and investment decisions.<sup>15</sup> The MPC accordingly determined that a 4.0% interest rate *"is appropriate to support domestic economic activity, while at the same time safeguarding the one-to-one link"* between the Namibia dollar and the South African rand. Inflation-targeting is the main driver of SARB – and by extension BoN – monetary policy, so the backdrop of continuing low domestic inflation was a key factor in enabling a further rate cut. Year-on-year (y/y) inflation slowed to 2.1% during January-April 2020, from 4.4% a year earlier (see below).

Uanguta noted that the domestic economy had further weakened during January-April, especially in the mining, manufacturing, wholesale and retail, transport and tourism sectors, and is expected to contract further. The BoN currently estimates real GDP will decrease by 6.9% this year.

Growth in private sector credit extensions (PSCE) to households and businesses slowed to 5.8% in the first four months of this year, down from 6.4% in the same period of last year. Economists expect that a portion of credit extension will be 'distressed' borrowing from businesses and consumers, since economic conditions are set to remain dire. PSCE fell by N\$1.2 billion (\$69 billion) or 1.2% in April. Windhoek-based stockbrokers **IJG Namibia** doubt that businesses will be using credit to invest in large capital projects any time soon.<sup>16</sup> Credit growth to individuals slowed to 5.7% in April, from 7.2% in March, because individuals paid back overdrafts, while corporate credit contracted for a third straight month. This declined by 1.5%, reflecting repayments of 'other loans and advances' by companies. Rolling 12-month private sector credit issuance at N\$3.3 billion (\$191m) was 47% below

<sup>13</sup> Bank of Namibia, Monetary Policy Statement, 17 Jun 2020.

<sup>14</sup> The Namibian, 3 Jun 2020.

<sup>15</sup> Bank of Namibia, Monetary Policy Statement, 17 Jun 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Namibia Economist, 3 Jun 2020.

the N\$6.2 billion (\$360m) level of April 2019, a level last seen in 2010. IJG noted that instead of taking on more long-term credit, many businesses would have applied for payment holidays on their existing credit facilities, as the government-imposed lockdowns wiped out their revenues. IJG commented:

*"It is for this same reason that commercial banks would have been extra prudent in extending credit during April as the risk of default would have increased because the general economic malaise."*<sup>17</sup>

In some better news for Namibia, **Hong Kong-based Fitch Ratings** reaffirmed Namibia's outlook as stable on 16 June, to correct what it said was an erroneous version assigned to the country ceiling. Namibia's long-term foreign currency issuer default rating (IDR) also remains unchanged on 'BB', to which it was downgrade from 'BB+' last October (see *ARC Briefing Namibia October 2019*).

### Shiimi unleashes Covid-19 budget spending boost ...

The first budget tabled by former central bank governor **Iipumbe Shiimi** on 27 May, entitled *"Together Defeating Covid-19"*, will see total spending, the budget deficit and national debt soar this year.<sup>18</sup> Shiimi had little room for manoeuvre given that the impact of the Covid-19 lockdown on the economy has substantially reduced revenue prospects. However, the budget effectively throws out the past three years of fiscal consolidation under his predecessor, **Calle Schlettwein**, at least for this year and probably next year also. How far and to what extent the government will be able in coming years to pare back spending and public debt will be a daunting challenge in ARC's view, especially as receipts from the **Southern African Customs Union (SACU)**,<sup>19</sup> Namibia's revenue mainstay for the 2020/21 fiscal year, are expected to fall from next fiscal year (although that has been projected before by the government, and has not happened).

The 2020/21 budget is for one year only, as the medium-term expenditure framework (MTEF) which would normally have accompanied it and covered the three fiscal years to 2022/23, will instead form part of the usual mid-year budget review, which Shiimi said would be during Q3 (in the past this has usually been in October). In fact, because the annual budget was delayed by two months due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it is in effect only a ten-month exercise as the fiscal year runs from 1 April to 30 March.

Local economists are nevertheless concerned as to how the social sectors prioritised in this year's budget will generate enough revenue, given there is to be less investment in income-generating economic sectors.<sup>20</sup> During a post-budget discussion hosted by **Nedbank Namibia** and **Simonis Storm Securities** on 28 May, economist **Klaus Schade** urged for a clear strategy to rein in the deficit and to overcome these difficulties after years of using borrowed funds for operational expenses. **University of Namibia (UNAM)** economics lecturer **Jesse de Beer** noted that a higher budget deficit would be expected during times of crisis, but that it is now quite concerning.<sup>21</sup> De Beer voiced anxiety about the continuing large public sector wage bill at 40% of total spending (including debt servicing) or 45% exclusive of debt. In fact personnel costs are 4% down on the revised estimate for the previous fiscal year, 2019/20, but only because of inflation and some redundancies.<sup>22</sup>

Total estimated spending goes up by 5% over the 2019/20 revised estimate, recurrent expenditure goes up by 6%, capital (development spending) by 10%, as does provision for debt repayment (domestic and foreign borrowings). The total appropriation of N\$64 billion (\$3.6 billion) rises to N\$78 billion (\$4.4 billion) including N\$8.5 billion (\$0.5 billion) in loan interest. Of the appropriation, 50% is allocated to social sectors (compared to 47% in 2019/20), with health getting N\$8 billion

<sup>17</sup> Namibia Economist, 3 June 2020.

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Finance, FY Budget Statement by Iipumbu Shiimi, Minister of Finance, 27 May 2020; Estimates of Revenue, Income and Expenditure for the 2020/21 Financial Year.

<sup>19</sup> Namibia, **Botswana, Lesotho, South Africa, Swaziland**

<sup>20</sup> The Namibian, 3 Jun 2020.

<sup>21</sup> Namibia Economist, 29 May 2020.

<sup>22</sup> Namibia Economist, 29 May 2020.

(\$0.4 billion), 22% goes to economic/infrastructure sectors, and 20% is for public safety, including defence which received N\$6.2 billion (\$0.4 billion), 5% more than in 2019/20. The armed forces have been deployed to enforce the Covid-19 lockdown and keep the land borders closed.<sup>23</sup>

Total spending as a proportion of GDP will more than double in 2020/21 to -12.5%, which Shiimi, perhaps optimistically, described as a “*once-off rise*”, acknowledging that spending will subsequently have to be “*recalibrated*” to stabilise further growth in public debt, which will spike up this year to a record 69% of GDP, due to an 18% surge in outstanding debt, to N\$100 billion (\$5.7 billion). The budget deficit has increased, not just because expenditure is set to exceed revenue by so much more than in 2019/20, but because nominal GDP is estimated to have fallen to N\$171 billion (\$9.7 billion) in 2020/1, down by 13.5% on 2019/20, which adversely affects the budget deficit/public debt to GDP metrics.<sup>24</sup>

Government finances 2018/19 to 2021/22 (N\$ billion) <sup>25</sup>				
	2018/19 (actual)	2019/20 (revised estimate)	2020/21 (estimate)	% change (2020/21 vs 2019/20)
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>55.7</b>	<b>58.2</b>	<b>51.4</b>	<b>-11.7</b>
Income/profits taxes	21.9	22.2	15.3	-6.9
SACU receipts	17.4	18.9	22.3	3.4
<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>65.2</b>	<b>67.9</b>	<b>72.8</b>	<b>4.9</b>
Recurrent	53.3	54.4	57.9	6.4
Personnel	29.4	29.8	28.7	-3.7
Capital	4.8	5.8	6.4	10.3
Debt interest + guarantees	7.1	7.7	8.5	10.4
<b>Budget balance</b>	<b>-9.5</b>	<b>-9.7</b>	<b>-21.4</b>	<b>120.6</b>
% of GDP	-4.9	-4.9	-12.5	
<b>Total public debt</b>	<b>88.9</b>	<b>100.4</b>	<b>117.5</b>	<b>17.0</b>
Domestic	56.2	63.7	74.1	16.3
Foreign	32.7	36.7	43.4	18.3
% of GDP	45.9	50.7	68.7	

Given the adverse impact on economic output and personal income of the Covid-19 lockdown, it is unsurprising that revenue is forecast to decrease by an unprecedented 12%, with income and profits taxes (personal and corporate tax receipts) down by 7%. Value-added tax receipts are estimates as 17% down on 2019/20 at N\$10 billion (\$0.6 billion). The one exception is Namibia’s share of SACU payments, which are projected to rise by 18% to N\$21 billion (\$1.2 billion), 18% higher than the 2019/20 revised estimate and 28% higher than the actual amount received in 2018/19. Shiimi warned that SACU receipts will come under pressure in 2021/22, “*in the face of subdued economic and trade conditions globally and in the Customs Area*”.<sup>26</sup> In actual fact, ARC analysis shows that the position is already less favourable than the bare figures indicate, because Namibia’s share of pool revenue is 3% lower in 2020/21 at N\$20.7 billion (\$1.2 billion), this being more than offset by a N\$1.6

<sup>23</sup> Finance Ministry, Estimates of Revenue, Income and Expenditure for the 2020/21 Financial Year.

<sup>24</sup> Finance Ministry, FY Budget Statement by Iipumbu Shiimi, Minister of Finance, 27 May 2020

<sup>25</sup> Finance Ministry, Estimates of Revenue, Income and Expenditure for the 2020/21 Financial Year.

<sup>26</sup> Finance Ministry, FY Budget Statement by Iipumbu Shiimi, Minister of Finance, 27 May 2020

billion (\$0.1 billion) revenue formula adjustment in Namibia's favour, whereas in 2019/20 it went the other way, i.e. there was a deduction.

This year's N\$26 billion (\$1.5 billion) borrowing requirement, which includes debt repayment, more than double that for 2019/20, is to be funded by cash reserves at the central bank (N\$9.1 billion) (\$0.5 billion), a N\$3.5 billion (\$0.2 billion) disbursement from the R10 billion (\$0.6 billion) two-year budget support and development project concessional loan from the **African Development Bank (AfDB)** approved in 2018, external borrowing of N\$6.7 billion (\$0.4 billion), from virtually nothing in 2019/20, domestic market borrowing of N\$10.3 billion (\$0.6 billion), and N\$3.2 billion (\$0.2 billion) in other unspecified Covid-19 borrowing.<sup>27</sup>

### ... but no new taxes – at least yet

Despite the revenue slump, Shiimi ruled out any tax increases or new taxes, for this year at least.<sup>28</sup> Those with taxable incomes above N\$50,000 (\$2,835) were told they must pay 'commensurate tax' (i.e. what they owe). To incentivise post-lockdown foreign direct investment, Shiimi has cancelled a proposal to end the tax deductibility of mining royalties (10% for diamonds, 3% for uranium). These are not linked to profitability but charged as a percentage of gross sales, which the mining sector dislikes anyway. Removing the tax offset would raise mining costs at a time of uncertain (apart from buoyant gold) commodity prices, and is strongly opposed by the **Chamber of Mines of Namibia (CMN)**. Shiimi said the change would "*encourage investor confidence and economic agents to explore, produce and re-invest in Namibia.*"<sup>29</sup>

However, other new tax proposals remain under review. These include dividend tax for residents (currently only paid by non-residents), taxation of trusts, and commercial transactions by charitable and religious entities, levying VAT on the income of listed asset managers, and expanding the raw material export levy to mining products not already covered along with specific agricultural, game and forestry products. Shiimi pledged "*extensive stakeholder consultations*" before any of these are enacted.

The mid-year budget will include "*an accompanying package of long-delayed structural policy reforms*" according to Shiimi.<sup>30</sup> He pledged that these will comprise "*evidence-based, transformational reforms*" to be implemented during the next MTEF. These will include measures to diversify domestic productive capacity, improve national competitiveness and enhance domestic resource mobilisation "*along a range of policy and administrative arrangements*".<sup>31</sup> This seems the bare minimum if Namibia is not to be at the end of a further sovereign credit ratings downgrade and in order to assuage the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**, already concerned by the slippage in Namibia's structural reform implementation, as expressed in its country mission Chapter IV reports (see *ARC Briefing Namibia June 2019*).

### Inflation ticks up slightly in May

While year-on-year (y/y) inflation blipped up in May to 2.1%, from 1.6% in April, this was still only just over half the level of a year earlier (4.1%), according to the latest **Namibia Consumer Price Index (NCPI)** published by the **Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA)**. Y/y 12-month inflation to end-May eased further to 2.8%, while the differential between goods inflation at 2.3% and services inflation at 1.7%, narrowed from 2% and 0.9% respectively in April.<sup>32</sup> Given that consumer demand will stay depressed until Namibia exits from lockdown completely, and better rainfall throughout Namibia this year, the main factor that could revive inflationary pressures within the economy in the near-term would be an upward spike in global oil prices from current low levels. Food and non-alcoholic

<sup>27</sup> Finance Ministry, Estimates of Revenue, Income and Expenditure for the 2020/21 Financial Year.

<sup>28</sup> Finance Ministry, FY Budget Statement by Iipumbu Shiimi, Minister of Finance, 27 May 2020.

<sup>29</sup> Finance Ministry, FY Budget Statement by Iipumbu Shiimi, Minister of Finance, 27 May 2020; CMN website, <https://www.chamberofmines.org.na/>

<sup>30</sup> Finance Ministry, FY Budget Statement by Iipumbu Shiimi, Minister of Finance, 27 May 2020.

<sup>31</sup> Finance Ministry, FY Budget Statement by Iipumbu Shiimi, Minister of Finance, 27 May 2020.

<sup>32</sup> Namibia Statistics Agency, Namibia Consumer Price Index, May 2020.

beverages (16.5% weighting in the NCPI goods and services basket) were again the main inflation driver in May. Y/y inflation accelerated to 4.7% (from 4.2% in April), with all 13 sub-components recording price increases, especially fruit (16.5%) and vegetables (8.0%). But price rises for bread and cereals slowed to 0.6%, from 2% in April. Mainly because the mines and energy ministry kept local pump prices unchanged (and has done so again for June), transport inflation (14.3% weighting) remained deflationary at -0.1%, unchanged on April. Unleaded petrol was kept at N\$10.35 (\$0.59) per litre and the price of diesel at N\$11.13 (\$0.63) per litre.<sup>33</sup> Accordingly, the cost of operating personal transport vehicles decreased steeply, by -6.2% (-0.2% in April), although vehicle purchase costs unexpectedly surged by 4.8% (0.3% previously), despite a slightly stronger local currency in May. Inflationary pressures are being constrained overall by the largest component of the NCPI, housing and utilities (28.4% weighting), remaining deflationary at -0.6% (-0.5% in April).

Due to the **United States (US)** currency's further weakening – due largely to investor concerns over a continued worsening of US-**China** political and trade relations, the South African rand/Namibia dollar slightly appreciated this month (by just over 2%) to \$1=R17.24 on 23 June, compared to \$1=R17.65 on 22 May.<sup>34</sup> Global oil prices have come off the floor in the past month due to most producers adhering to the current **Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec)+** production ceilings. **West Texas Intermediate (WTI)** benchmark spiked up to a three-month high of just under \$30 per barrel on 19 June, while **Brent** crude also surged to \$42 per barrel.<sup>35</sup> Oil prices rose despite concerns over a potential second wave of Covid-19 infections, with Opec production compliance and stronger demand the key drivers. **Commerzbank AG** analyst **Carsten Fritsch** commented:

*“Opec+ has done a good job turning things around and stronger demand also helps.”*<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Namibia Economist, 1 Jun 2020.

<sup>34</sup> XE.Corp, XE Currency Converter (online), 23 May 2020.

<sup>35</sup> Oilprice.com (online), 19 Jun 2020.

<sup>36</sup> Oilprice.com (online), 19 Jun 2020.

## Planner

15 July **(Namibia)** **Namibia Statistics Agency**, June 2020 NCPI.  
 19 August **(Namibia)** **Bank of Namibia**, Monetary Policy Committee Meeting.  
 End-November 2020 **(Namibia)** Regional council and local authority elections

## Chronology

23 Jun 2020 **Windhoek (Namibia)** *The Namibian*. **High Court** declares that state of emergency regulations that forbid **Namibian** employers from dismissing workers, reducing their pay or putting them on leave due to the **covid-19** pandemic are unconstitutional and invalid;

23 Jun 2020 **Windhoek (Namibia)** *The Namibian*. **The Namibian** reports to have seen documents showing that the **Office of the Auditor General** hand-picked **Madawa Investment** in March to fix a water leak for the excessively high price of N\$106,000 (\$6,150);

22 Jun 2020 **Windhoek (Namibia)** *The Namibian*. President **Hage Geingob** announces a further easing of the **coronavirus** lockdown to boost economic activity, including opening the border to international tourists, despite a rise in confirmed **covid-19** cases;

22 Jun 2020 **Windhoek (Namibia)** *The Namibian*. Finance minister **Ipumbu Shiimi** says government will soon announce a second stimulus package aimed at medium to long-term economic recovery;

21 Jun 2020 **Windhoek (Namibia)** *The Namibian*. **State House** press secretary **Alfredo Hengari** accuses local newspaper **The Namibian** of telling "cheap lies" and says it should stop tarnishing President **Hage Geingob's** reputation, following questions over why the presidency is shutting out mainstream media;

19 Jun 2020 **Windhoek (Namibia)** *The Namibian*. **National Intelligence Agency** vets **Namibia Revenue Authority** CEO applicants, after the agency declared in April that none of the shortlisted candidates was fit for the job;

16 Jun 2020 **Windhoek (Namibia)** *The Namibian*. **National Fishing Corporation of Namibia** acting CEO **Paulus Ngalangi** is sacked after police say that Ngalangi transported an alleged **South African** fugitive who tested positive for **covid-19** into **Namibia**;

17 Jun 2020 **Windhoek (Namibia)** *Namibia Economist*. **Bank of Namibia** (central bank) cuts the repurchase rate to 4% from 4.25%, bringing the short-term interest rates to historical low levels since independence;

9 Jun 2020 **Windhoek (Namibia)** *The Namibian*. President **Hage Geingob** says government rejected an offer by the **German** government to pay **Namibia** €10m (N\$180m) (\$11.3m) as reparation for the 1904-1908 genocide;

28 May 2020 **Windhoek (Namibia)** *Namib Times*. President **Hage Geingob** admits breaching **coronavirus** regulations on 19 April by hosting a celebration to mark the 60th anniversary of the ruling **SWAPO Party of Namibia** – Geingob says all 10 guests were subsequently fine;

27 May 2020 **Windhoek (Namibia)** *The Namibian*. **Windhoek** court will deliver ruling on 3 June on **Investec Asset Management Namibia** former client director **Ricardo Gustavo** and six others charged in the **Fishrot** corruption scandal;

27 May 2020 **Windhoek (Namibia)** *The Namibian*. Finance minister **Ipumbu Shiimi** says the economy will contract by 6.6% in 2020 and by 1.1% next year due to the **covid-19** pandemic.

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### Getting in touch

Please contact us by email [info@africariskconsulting.com](mailto:info@africariskconsulting.com) or call + 44 (0) 20 7078 4080

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