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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **RACING INTO THE FUTURE: CHEETAH CONSERVATION FUND'S 12<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL FUNDRAISING GALA AND AWARDS**

*(Otjiwarongo, Namibia)* - For the 12<sup>th</sup> year, the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) celebrated the speed and elegance of the cheetah at their Gala Dinner and Conservation Awards presentation, held Saturday at the Windhoek Country Club. This year's theme, **Racing into the Future**, highlighted CCF's vision for long-term cheetah survival, and its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The lively evening began with a music performance by the Ongoma Marimba Band followed by Danella and Jesus, from Otjiwarongo, who performed throughout the event, which featured a silent auction and a menu that included Namibian Nature's Reserve beef generously sponsored by Meatco. Approximately 275 people were in attendance, including representatives from the business, conservation, agriculture and government sectors in Namibia and internationally.

The Master of Ceremonies, CCF's vice chairman, **Mr. Tangenyi Erkana**, moved the programme along while entertaining the guests with his observations of human behaviour. **Ms. Jacqueline Asheeke**, CEO of Federation of Namibian Tourism Associations (FENTA) gave an inspirational and lively speech on the importance of the tourism sector and the inter-relationship between conservation and tourism.

**Dr. Laurie Marker**, Founder and Executive Director of CCF gave a short speech highlighting CCF's past 20 years and her vision for the next 20 years, as she leads CCF's **Racing into the Future**. Dr. Marker said that "smart partnerships with businesses and communities will be the key for cheetah survival, as well as education and good farming and wildlife practices. This year's Conservation Awards highlight these partnerships by recognising educators, farmers and smart business practitioners that help conserve the cheetah and the Namibian environment."

Marker presented the 2010 Cheetah Business of the Year - Smart Partnership Award to **Kobus du Plessis, CEO of Meatco** for promoting and supporting of predator-friendly farming practices. In his acceptance speech, Mr. du Plessis spoke about the value and importance to Namibia of Meatco's Natures Reserve brand which rewards good farming practices. One of the many reasons why Meatco was selected as exclusive supplier of Woolworths free-range beef was due to farmers signing a declaration that they have not used gin traps, poisons or pack hunting to control predators, effectively putting an end to the use of inhumane methods of predator control by livestock farmers.

"Meatco's meat producers – the farmers – are serious about conserving our natural environment; cattle are procured from Namibian farms, with the heart of our brand resting in the freedom of these animals to express natural behaviour. Buy-in on these practices contributes to ensuring that Meatco's brand experience supports sound ethical consumerism," Mr. du Plessis stated. "At Meatco we recognise that being a benefit to the communities, economies and natural environments we touch, is no longer an optional outcome, but a strategic imperative. We strongly activate our commitment to "doing the right thing". Consumers can only make responsible choices if they have access to information pertaining to the social and environmental conditions under which goods are procured and produced. Thus the reason for transparency regarding companies and their products traceability. A large part of this work consists of raising public awareness through well established foundations such as the CCF. Meatco's involvement with the Cheetah Conservation Foundation creates the kind of long-term loyalty that is extremely difficult to compete against. The business case for Meatco for "doing the right thing" is crystal clear", du Plessis concluded.

The 2010 Cheetah Farmer of the Year Award was given to **Ms. Ida Katuta**, a farmer who practices predator-friendly livestock management practices, including the use of one of CCF's Livestock Guarding Dogs. However, Ms. Katuta was unable to attend the awards due to issues on her farm she does accept predators as a natural component of a healthy ecosystem and believes that their conservation is not contrary to the needs of humans --We Can Live Together.

CCF's Senior Research Assistant and PhD Candidate, **Ezequiel Chimbioputo Fabiano**, was presented the 2010 Conservation Educator Award for his integral involvement in teaching professionals at CCF's International Conservation Biology Training courses.

Finally, the 2010 Cheetah Conservationist of the Year Award was given to **John Kasaona**, Assistant Director of the IRDNC in the Kunene Region and Chairman of NACSO (Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organizations). Kasaona gave an exciting talk on the development of communal conservation in Namibia.

The evening's Keynote Speaker, **The Hon. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah**, Minister of Environment and Tourism, representing HE President Hifikepunye Pohamba, talked about the inter-relationship of cheetah and conservation as an important balance of the country's ecosystem and how the two are linked.

The Silent Auction held throughout the evening was again a huge success with over 90 items donated by local businesses. Guests bid on a variety of wonderful items, including recreational 'get-aways' at exclusive tourist venues, artwork, jewellery and Namibian craftwork. The wide range of auction items brought in contributions for CCF's research, conservation and education programmes, all which are supported through donations (more information on CCF's conservation, education and research programmes is available at [www.cheetah.org](http://www.cheetah.org)).

**PHOTOS** (please click on images for higher resolution images):



L to R: Minister of Environment and Tourism, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah and CCF Executive Director, Dr. Laurie Marker present Mr. Kobus du Plessis, CEO of Meatco with the 2010 Chimbioputo Cheetah Partnership Award. L to R: Minister of Environment and Tourism, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah and CCF Executive Director, Dr. Laurie Marker present Ezequiel Fabiano with the 2010 Cheetah Conservation Educator of the Year Award. L to R: Minister of Environment and Tourism, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah and CCF Executive Director, Dr. Laurie Marker present John Kasaona with the 2010 Cheetah Conservationist of the Year Award.



L to R: Chris Weaver, CEO WWF Namibia and CCF Director, Dr. Laurie Marker with Minister of Environment and Tourism, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, CEO Eco-Logic Environmental Management Consulting; Dr. Laurie Ndaitwah, and John Kasaona, winner of the 2010 Cheetah Conservationist of the Year Award at CCF's annual Gala fundraising dinner. L to R: Namibian women conservationists Ms. Danica Shaw, CEO Eco-Logic Environmental Management Consulting; Dr. Laurie Ndaitwah, and John Kasaona, winner of the 2010 Cheetah Conservationist of the Year Award; Ms. Almut Kronsbein, CEO NAPHA; and Ms. Jackie Asheke, CEO, FENETA.

**AWARDEES BIOS:**

**Kobus du Plessis, CEO of Meatco - 2010 Cheetah Business of the Year - Smart Partnership Award** - [Meatco](#) has been the cornerstone of the Namibian Meat Industry for more than 20 years and is the Champion of Namibia's free-range beef products and producers. Meatco's support of the Farm Assured Namibian (FAN) meat scheme has positioned Namibia as the premier supplier of not only hormone free beef in southern Africa but the predator friendly brand of Nature's Reserve. Products are sourced from farms all across Namibia, where semi-desert conditions and extensive cattle farming ensure a deliciously distinctive taste. Meatco has grown into an industry leader and has gained the respect of the international community for consistently producing nutritious, quality beef of the highest standards. Through its smart partnership with the CCF, Meatco has been able to introduce a code of conduct which helps farmers identify predators and teaches humane methods of predator management. One of the many reasons why Meatco was selected as exclusive supplier of Woolworth's free range beef was due to farmers signing a declaration that they have not used gin traps, poisons or pack hunting to control predators. More than half of Namibians make a living off cattle farming either directly or indirectly. It is a way of life that has allowed Meatco to bring the wholesome taste of Namibia to the international community's doorstep.

**John Kasaona - Guest Speaker, 2010 Cheetah Conservationist of the Year** - John Kasaona was born in 1971 in the Kunene region, in the village of Sesfontein. Growing up Himba, John learned about nature from his father during his youth herding the family's livestock. John grew up as a conservationist, the son of one of the first game guards in the Kunene region who worked for the IRDNC (Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation) organisation. Today, John is the Assistant Director of the [IRDNC](#) in the Kunene region as well as the Chairman of [NACSO](#) (Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organizations). John's work was featured in the recent film "Milking the Rhino" and February of this year, John presented his work at the TED Conference in the United States. [TED](#) is a non-profit that is devoted to ideas worth spreading, and brings together the world's most fascinating thinkers and doers to give inspirational and informative talks.

**Ezequiel Chimbioputo Fabiano – 2010 Cheetah Conservation Educator of the Year** - E. Fabiano was born in Lisbon, Portugal and grew up in Lubango, Angola. He moved with his family to Namibia. After completing High School in 1999, he graduated from the University of Namibia in 2002 with co-majors in Environmental Biology and Computer Science. He was offered an internship at CCF in 2002 after attending a Conservation Biology Course in cooperation with the Smithsonian. During the next years, Fabiano became a Senior Research Assistant managing databases, conducting data analysis and assisting with game counts and other ecological research projects. He also co-taught visiting students from tertiary institutions, such as the Polytechnic and University of Namibia. In 2006 Fabiano completed his Master degree Environment and Development, Protected Area Management, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Currently, he is a PhD candidate at Pontificia Universidade Catolica do Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. In addition to his research on cheetah census techniques, he has been instrumental in assisting to teach CCF's international training courses sponsored

by the Howard G Buffett Foundation. Since 2008, with his help, CCF has trained over 200 of international cheetah conservation professionals from 15 countries.

**Ida Katuta – 2010 Cheetah Conservation Farmer of the Year** - Ida Katuta developed a love for animals and farming whilst growing up on the farm where her father was employed. Her dream of keeping livestock on her own farm was realized when she moved to a resettlement farm north of Gobabis. Although she is still farming on a part-time basis, she is eager to learn more about good farming practices and attends farming lectures whenever possible. In June 2009, Ida contacted CCF after suffering many stock losses in that month, and strongly suspected cheetahs as the culprit. She did not want to trap/shoot the cheetahs, and was desperate for help from CCF. Fortunately, a litter of guarding dogs were born at the end of June – one of the puppies was placed at her farm in the beginning of September 2009. Since the placement, we have visited her farm twice to check on the pup's progress. The dog "Cheetah" is in excellent condition, as Ida communicates well with the caretaker of the farm and ensures that good quality food is always available. She is very grateful for CCF's help contacting us regularly letting us know how well the dog is doing!

#### **Editor's notes:**

- The **Cheetah Conservation Fund** is a Namibian non-profit trust dedicated to the long-term survival of the cheetah and its ecosystems.
- Since 1990, the organisation has developed education and conservation programmes based on its bio-medical cheetah research studies, published scientific research papers and has presented educational programmes to over 250 000 outreach school learners and over 1500 farmers. In addition, CCF has donated over 350 Anatolian livestock guarding dogs to commercial and communal farmers as part of their innovative non-lethal livestock management programme.
- Research into cheetah biology and ecology has greatly increased our understanding of the fastest land animal and education programmes for schools and the farming community help change public attitudes to allow predator and humans to co-exist. However, despite the many successes of CCF programmes, the cheetah is still Africa's most endangered big cat.

If you would like more information on CCF's research, conservation and education programmes, please contact CCF at:

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