

Roux-ché Locke

Group Manager: External Relations

Tel: +264 (0)61 207 5207

E-mail: roux-che.locke@ol.na

Francios Olivier

Group Journalist and Creative Writer

Tel: +264 (0)61 2075314

E-mail: francios.olivier@ol.na

www.ohlthaverlist.com



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Innovation can save the day

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While the current economic climate – both globally and locally - is making its mark on national and international budgets, affecting both the business and individual pocket at a high low, innovation continues to be the order of the day for the Ohlthaver & List (O&L) Group regardless of the challenges it faces in these tough economic times.

The recent groundbreaking ceremony of the N\$500 million fourth phase of Wernhil Park for which construction has just kicked-off, is testament to the group's commitment and willingness to continue to invest in the Namibian economy, regardless. The O&L Group Director: Corporate Affairs, Gideon Shilongo stressed on innovation as a key player in the survival and growth of the Namibian economy in the midst of the current economic recession, during an interview on the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) TV programs *Good Morning Namibia* and *Business Today*. While he uses the home-grown barley project brought to life by Namibia Breweries Limited (NBL) – a subsidiary of the O&L Group – in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Water & Forestry (MAWF), and government's Agricultural Business Development Agency (AgriBusDev) about six years ago, as an example of the level of innovation, and as a reflection of the bold approach required to build the economy, the O&L Group has over the years proven its commitment to its vision of being the most progressive and inspiring company.

Shilongo: "The home-grown barley project is a perfect example of the level of breakthrough thinking and innovation required to carry Namibia through these challenging times and grow the economy to the next level. With employment creation being the main motivation behind the home-grown barley project, a rippling effect of more creations were born from this initiative."

### Alleviating poverty

The birth of *King Lager* for example, was never planned says Shilongo. However, this beer which is one of the latest additions to the NBL beer portfolio, and represents the Namibian 'King' – the man and woman who works hard every day to care for their communities and in turn build the nation -, was the result of an innovation which was initially born from an opportunity identified to create employment for Namibians. Shilongo: "As a breakthrough organization it is within the O&L culture to always seek ways to support the national fight against poverty by creating job opportunities. Our O&L purpose of 'Creating a future, enhancing life', is the driving force and motivation to always ask ourselves 'How can we do more?' Just like the fourth phase of Wernhil Park and all other developments within the group over the past few years, the home-grown barley project speaks to our commitment to supporting government's Harambee Prosperity Plan (HPP), Growth at Home Strategy and Vision 2030. 'As a business, how do we meet government halfway in its fight of alleviating poverty?' is thus the question that comes to mind naturally on our pursuit to contributing to the growth of Namibia's economy. Job creation is always an

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obvious answer, because through job creation you uplift the living conditions of those employed, thus contributing to poverty eradication, and in turn strengthens the local economy. It just makes sense.”

### **Private Public Partnership (PPP) Is Key**

A key element to successfully building the economy and a nation is that of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) says Shilongo – an element without which the progression in the implementation of an initiative like the home-grown barley project would not have been possible. Eventually this partnership with the MAWF and AgriBusDev led to the study, test, research and identification of specific ‘green-scheme’ localities where barley is now being grown and harvested. Shilongo:” It wasn’t necessarily a smooth process to get where we are today with this specific project, but we definitely would not have reached our current successes without the partnership with government.”

### **The Dream**

Eventually the home-grown barley project aims to grow 60 000 tons of un-malted barley annually through the establishment of a sustainable barley industry, within the next ten years. This capacity will provide not only for NBL’s annual requirements of 40 000 tons of malted barley to meet the needs of its current global demand, but will see for the creation of approximately 2500 new job opportunities. Meanwhile, the current 1300 tons harvested in Namibia needed something to be used for. NBL decided to innovate, and King Lager was born as the country’s first beer containing un-malted barley. For 2016 alone, O&L, in particular NBL has invested at least N\$6.5 Million in the barley project, which currently makes use of 400 hectares of irrigated land made available in the AgriBusDev green scheme localities. To realize the dream of 60 000 tons and thousands of jobs, the project will need at least 12 000 hectares of irrigated land. However, this is a dream O&L is determined to achieve.

“Unemployment is a national issue that affects every Namibian, and it is only in a unified spirit of camaraderie and working together that we could potentially reverse the challenge of poverty, which affects us all. As a proudly Namibian company, we at O&L are committed to the goals and ideals of Vision 2030 and the HPP that addresses amongst others, unemployment and poverty alleviation. Our investments and innovations are O&L’s humble contributions to this cause. We need to be cognizant of the reality that government cannot do this alone. The future of our country and its economy, as well as the well-being and upliftment of each and every Namibian is dependent on the level of input from each and every one of us, especially the investment into the local economy by the local private sector,” Shilongo concluded.

**Ends,**

O&L Group Director: Corporate Affairs, Gideon Shilongo



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