

Dear Chris,

I thank you for your detailed and enlightening explanations you have presented to me in response to our joint press release and statement; we have obviously hit a sensitive nerve.

You chose spreading your personal opinion about the public joint press release of Earthlife Namibia and an international coalition of environmental and development organisations of the joint statement against bush-wood export to Hamburg in two letters to all NCE members and friends. Please understand, that I have to level playing field with my response.

You compare the detailed rationale of an international coalition (<https://www.robinwood.de/sites/default/files/Hamburg-Namibia%20biomass%20statement-9.10.2020.pdf> , <https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2020/hamburg-namibia-biomass-statement/>) to a critique on "everything linked to development and resource use" which in consequence would lead us "to go back to living in caves". The "slippery slope" is probably one of the oldest misleading arguments used in discussions about sustainability. Without adding anything to the discussion, it serves the sole purpose to discredit the addressee.

**Let me try to respond to your points in honesty and detail.**

You say - 1.: This initiative is at a very early stage of investigation, discussion and negotiations. If things come together, then the process would kick off probably only from 2025. The project is currently in feasibility phase, where the technical, environmental, social, and economic aspects are still being scrutinised by both the Namibian and German counterparts.

Response to 1.: To the contrary. The presentation shown in Hamburg in January 2020, states on page 7 that at least 9 million tons of bush-wood should be harvested in 2024.

<https://www.hamburger-energietisch.de/WP-Server/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Tiefstack-Peter-Heck-presentation-about-Namibia-BIP.pdf>

This GIZ project has devoured already several millions of Euro for developmental assistance, meant to improve the livelihood of the people of Namibia and its ecosphere. The proposed biomass partnership with Hamburg is advanced and concrete enough to evaluate its possible effects. An initiative of 14 organisations formulated a well-founded joint statement on the plans. To dismiss this joint statement without having sought to understand its reasoning undermines the democratic process of open discussion. Now is exactly the right time to review this process, and not only when it is already happening.

You say - 2.: A Namibian delegation visited Germany, comprising government, respected environmental NGO, the charcoal association and others to discuss opportunities. They also met the German Ministry of Environment. After in depth discussions and follow-ups, these

parties don't share your concerns (perhaps because they have more in-depth insight into the project specifics than what is currently being portrayed in the recent press release).

Response to 2.: In deed it is not uncommon and not generally dubious, that economy representatives follow Governmental Officials abroad to lobby for their interests. That the concerns raised in the joint statement now, have not been discussed back then, is no wonder. Your argument is not suitable to undermine any of the validity of the joint statement.

You say - 3.: The city of Hamburg wishes to exit from using coal (much imported from South Africa) for carbon reasons. They are looking at options. The most obvious option is gas, from Russia. For geo-political reasons this is awkward. It would be worth looking at whether opponents to the Namibia biomass option have any direct or indirect interests in the gas or coal sector, or whether they have any better solutions for transitioning from coal?

Response to 3.: The questions raised by the coalition have nothing to do with Russian gas. That you try to make this connection insinuate the influence of Russian agents and also indirectly accuse me of being influenced by such interests - is actually a disgraceful move. Just to be very clear about it - members of this coalition belong to the loudest voices in Germany to demand 100% renewable and decentralized energy production and demand the end of coal in Hamburg by 2025 and the end of coal and natural gas throughout Germany until 2035.

You say - 4.: The Namibia biomass option would probably be by means of bush pellets, transported within country by rail. This would help restore degraded rangeland, add value to the bush (in line with Vision 2030), create jobs and bring in foreign currency

Response to 4.: Please believe me, if it was like you state, these concerned environmental and development organisations would be a group of cheering fans. While you cite the advertising leaflet of the biomass-partnership well, you did not bring a single argument against the joint statement.

You say - 5.: Much of the information in the Statement and Press Release is unfounded, based on wrong assumptions and factually incorrect – it seems to be aimed at stirring up public populist sentiments amongst the uninformed.

Response to 5.: Our joint statement on the biomass partnership is scientifically detailed and well-reasoned. You don't provide any actual evidence to refute any of the statements. Which assumptions are wrong? Which facts are not correct? Please, share your thoughts with us that the assumptions and facts are incorrect, so that we can consider them.

You say - 6.: For example, the concerns about land use change – this would be predominantly beneficial – thinning out the bush and improving Namibia’s rangelands. If this initiative went ahead, it would have to adhere to the highest international sustainability criteria, which is partly why Namibia has chosen to discuss this opportunity with Germany, and not other less-environmentally inclined countries.

Response to 6.: In 2015 the GIZ/ BCBU project commissioned a "Strategic Environmental Assessment of Large-Scale Bush Thinning and Value- Addition Activities in Namibia". It was carried out by the South African Institute for Environmental Assessment (SAIEA) and highlights severe ecological risks coming with large-scale bush thinning.

<https://www.dasnamibia.org/download/studies/STUDY-BushThinning-Final.pdf>

Those risks have not been adequately considered in the further development of the bush-biomass partnership, no safeguard system is in place, but safeguards are to be developed before supply agreements are signed, not vice versa. Your hint that otherwise "less-environmentally inclined countries" might take this deal, is not an argument but called "false dilemma fallacy".

You say - 7.: Another example is that of claimed job losses. Jobs would actually be created. The bush initiative does not conflict or compete with the charcoal sector. First, there is an abundance of bush biomass. Second, the charcoal jobs are unskilled, while the biomass jobs would be semi-skilled and skilled. Third, the ultimate markets are not in competition - one industry does not undermine the opportunities of the other. This initiative is opening an entirely new value chain.

Response to 7.: Do you truly consider the production of a crude export commodity (wood chips or pellets for Hamburg) a value chain?

A large-scale de-bushing project aims on reducing the abundance of bush biomass. A possible effect on the availability of the crude material for charcoal production is not only remotely plausible, but at the core of the project and thus highly probable. Even in a market with a general abundance of supply, there is always competition for the cheapest and most readily accessible product. On the local level, this would immediately lead to harsh conflicts.

You are pointing towards the fact that lost unskilled jobs in charcoal production are to be replaced with semi-skilled ones in de-bushing. You might realize, that you are contradicting your own no. 1 with this claim? But above that, the large number of jobs in small scale charcoal production can't be compared to the few jobs that would be created with fully automated de-

bushing service contractors. I refer to Prof. Rabensteins' recent study "Export of bushwood from Namibia - Impact on the Namibian labour market"

<https://www.hamburger-energetisch.de/WP-Server/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Bushwood-Export-and-Jobs-in-Namibia.pdf>



Annual harvest of one worker depending on the degree of mechanisation

You say - 8. An important aspect to consider is the carbon footprint of the bush biomass when it reaches Germany. It may surprise you to learn that specific carbon assessments for the project show that it is actually carbon negative. It is thus immediately 100%+ better than both the existing coal and the natural gas which it is being compared to.

Response to 8.: To the contrary it may surprise you, that the effects of carbon emissions are at the very core of the critique. The study commissioned by GIZ and carried out by the consultants of UNIQUE is of poor quality and flawed.

[https://www.unique-landuse.de/images/publications/vereinheitlicht/2020-05\\_Greenhouse\\_Gas\\_Assessment\\_Namibia.pdf](https://www.unique-landuse.de/images/publications/vereinheitlicht/2020-05_Greenhouse_Gas_Assessment_Namibia.pdf)

Large-scale de-bushing leads to large emissions from land use changes. The 62 page expert review of Prof. Rabenstein on the UNIQUE study lays down in detail (e. g. Page 45 ff), why and where the assumptions leading to the false claim of de-bushing as a "carbon sink" are simply wrong. So, you obviously did not even read the abstract of this report.

Report commissioned by HET e.V. (Hamburger Energietisch), June 2020:

<https://www.hamburger-energietisch.de/WP-Server/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Klimawirkungen-von-Buschholz-aus-Namibia-in-Hamburg-V1-final.pdf>

The short English version (page 5-6)

<https://www.hamburger-energietisch.de/WP-Server/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Climate-impacts-of-bushwood-from-Namibia-in-Hamburg.pdf>

Chris, I hope you will find sufficient evidence in my explanations that reflects the value and seriousness of the coalition's joint statement and press release. I ask you to contemplate opinions other than your own as valid. Please refrain from portraying me and as such the coalition as populist or perhaps selfish. Let us please keep up the discussion in a respectful tenor.

With kind regards,

Bertchen