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ATTENTION: The News Editor

PRESS RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE KARAKUL BOARD OF NAMIBIA

On 22 September 2010 the annual “Karakul Producer Forum” was held in Keetmanshoop. Under the guidance of the Karakul Board of Namibia this meeting traditionally serves to inform Karakul producers on the latest developments within their industry as well as to articulate needs and desires of Karakul producers. The Forum is open to any producer who holds an Agra pelt number, a large number of who are farming within the communal areas of the South. The Agra database currently has about 600 producers. Agra has an exclusive service agreement with the Karakul Board of Namibia to sort and market all Karakul pelts produced within Namibia as well as South Africa and Botswana. For this purpose Agra provides a sorting centre with highly trained and specialised staff situated in Bessemer Street in Windhoek. Pelts are marketed twice a year under the brand name ‘swakara’ via public auctions targeting the international fur trade through the Danish auction house ‘Kopenhagen Fur’.

The Motto of the Producer Forum was ‘swakara Production within Ethical Norms’. Under the guidance of Mr. Steve Solley, an international expert on the animal rights movement, and delegated by the ‘International Fur Trade Federation’, www.iff.com a detailed discussion on the need for globally acceptable farming procedures as well as skilful branding requirements for ‘swakara’ took place. In this regard the Karakul Board of Namibia wishes to reiterate that only pelts originating from lambs born naturally are produced in Namibia, South Africa and Botswana.

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All pelts farmed in Namibia, South Africa and Botswana are sold under the brand name 'swakara' and are labelled 'Origin Assured' www.originassured.com . This label is issued by the 'International Fur Trade Federation' (IFTF) and guarantees that those pelts are produced in accordance with internationally accepted ethical farming practices. Furthermore the Board wishes to inform the public that legally binding regulations are stringently enforced to ensure that only pelts conforming to the strict 'swakara' assortment standards are exported from Namibia. A detailed *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Karakul Sheep in Namibia* has been scientifically developed and distributed to all Southern African producers. Its comprehensive adherence is mandatory. Furthermore a modernised version of an electrical stunning device for the humane euthanasia of lambs has been developed by the board. It is currently being distributed to producers to replace the older version in use since the 1970`s. Under paragraph 10(1)(o)(i) of *The Karakul Pelts and Wool Act of 1982* all required regulatory power is vested within the Karakul Board of Namibia.

The Forum furthermore requested the 'Karakul Board' to implement a process whereby the word 'Karakul' is substituted by the word 'swakara' wherever feasible. Since the first Karakul arrived in Namibia in 1907 these sheep have been bred and selected to obtain the unique characteristics of a modern 'swakara' pelt, which is only available from Southern Africa. The 'Karakul Board of Namibia' will therefore engage with Government to negotiate a name change to 'Swakara Board of Namibia'.

For any further questions please contact:

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