

**MEDIA RELEASE**

12 AUGUST 2020

WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA

**DEBMARINE NAMIBIA & UNAM LAUNCH COVID-19  
TESTING LABORATORY**

---

In the wake of increasing transmission of COVID-19 across Namibia, diamond recovery giant Debmarine Namibia and the University of Namibia have teamed up and established a laboratory that is licensed to conduct COVID-19 tests as from 3 August 2020. The official handover of the equipment took place yesterday 11 August 2020 at the UNAM School of Medicine.

Debmarine Namibia acquired a COVID-19 PCR testing laboratory and signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the University of Namibia (UNAM), School of Medicine to conduct tests. The sponsorship will support Government efforts in the national fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, this sponsorship supports the Company's internal focus on protecting and testing its employees as well.

UNAM's rich profile of science and medicine experts will run the facility for a period of around one year, after which the ownership of the equipment will be ceded to the university.

The PCR machine valued at more than N\$ 3.6 million will play a vital role in the turnaround time for results as it is expected to analyse at least 250 samples per 8 hour shift. The establishment of the testing laboratory at UNAM's Hage Geingob Campus will increase the diagnostic and prognostic testing process of COVID-19 and complement efforts by the Namibia Institute of Pathology (NIP) and accelerate the country's testing capacity. NIP helped UNAM acquire the license by guiding them through the strict licensing process.

Debmarine Namibia CEO Otto Shikongo committed the company to doing everything it can to protect its employees and the surrounding communities. "We value the health and safety of our people above all else and are equally committed to delivering support to our country throughout this difficult period. Our aim is to keep our operations running, safely, and to proactively support and supplement efforts of the government", remarked Shikongo.

"This great contribution by Debmarine Namibia will offer UNAM medical students real time clinical opportunities that will benefit the country's only locally trained medical

doctors phenomenally”, remarked UNAM Vice Chancellor, Professor Kenneth Matengu.

The PCR machine came with a fully equipped laboratory equipment such as fridges, freeze samples, cabinets with ultra-violet to prep the specimens and centrifuge machines and so forth.

For the past two weeks, the new PCR machine underwent stringent Government and World Health Organisation validation processes. “The UNAM laboratory team responsible for operating the testing machine have been trained by experts to increase local capacity”, remarked Debmarine Namibia Strategic Project Portfolio Manager, Danie van Aswegen. He added that the company tried its level best to make sure that the laboratory is fully equipped and ready.

The acquisition of the PCR machine is an extra precautionary measure by Debmarine Namibia to protect its employees and minimise the risk of the virus spreading into the business. The availability of the testing machine will enable the company to test employees before they go to the vessel as well as the shorebased employees said Debmarine Namibia Senior Human Resources Manager André Liebenberg. He said two-thirds of their companies’ employees are sea-going and the acquisition of the PCR machine adds a further layer to the robust precautionary measures the company already has in place. “This testing will shorten quarantine period for our employees”.

The machine was acquired through leveraging the global supply chain and procurement capabilities of De Beers Group, via Anglo American plc. “We are delighted to have been able to use our global procurement reach to make the acquisition of this machine possible”, said De Beers Resident Director in Namibia Daniel Kali.

The handover was witnessed by the Minister of Health and Social Services Dr Kalumbi Shangula, Minister of Higher Education Dr Itah Kandji-Murangji and the Chief Executive Officer of the Namibia Institute of Pathology Dr David Uirab.

- ends -

## CONTACT

Stella Ipinge

Communication Manager, Debmarine Namibia

Tel +264 61 297 8643 | [stella.auala@debeersgroup.com](mailto:stella.auala@debeersgroup.com) | [www.debmarinenamibia.com](http://www.debmarinenamibia.com)

## ABOUT DEBMARINE NAMIBIA

Debmarine Namibia is a joint venture marine diamond prospecting and recovery company, owned in equal shares by the Government of the Republic of Namibia and De Beers Group. Debmarine Namibia commenced operations in January 2002 and mines off the southern

coast of Namibia. The company operates five diamond recovery vessels and one exploration and sampling vessel, the mv SS Nujoma. The recovery vessels mine diamonds off the ocean floor using highly advanced drill technology, supported with sophisticated tracking, positioning and surveying equipment. Debmarine Namibia is ISO 14001, ISM and OHSAS 18001 certified, in line with its commitment to safety and environmental management. Debmarine Namibia is a recognised world leader in marine diamond exploration and recovery.

