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MEDIA RELEASE

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City of Windhoek Rejects Call for a Municipal Payment Boycott and Cautions Residents Against Unlawful Conduct

The City of Windhoek has taken note of a social media post published on 03 November 2026 by Mr Shaun E. Gariseb, who identifies himself as a representative of the Khomas Residents and Ratepayers Association. The post calls on residents to participate in a boycott of payment for municipal services and makes a number of assertions about the City's credit control measures, billing system and governance that are inaccurate and misleading.

The City respects the right of every resident, ratepayer association and stakeholder to hold and express views on municipal affairs. That right is protected by Article 21(1) of the Namibian Constitution. It is, however, exercised subject to Article 21(2), which permits reasonable restrictions imposed by law, including in relation to incitement to an offence. Robust criticism of the City is welcome. A call to residents to withhold payment of lawfully determined municipal charges is a different matter: it is an invitation to disregard a statutory obligation, and the City cannot remain silent in the face of it.

The City's position on the proposed payment boycott

The City unequivocally rejects and condemns the call for a payment boycott. Payment for municipal services is not a voluntary undertaking. Council determines the fees, charges and other moneys payable for services under section 30(1)(u) of the Local Authorities Act, 1992 (Act 23 of 1992), and the Act further provides, in section 78, that the owner of immovable property is liable for arrear fees, charges and other moneys due to a Council in respect of any service. Council's Credit Control Policy, which governs the measures now being implemented, was adopted under that statutory framework.

The mass disconnection exercise is not an attempt to punish residents, nor is it evidence of governance failure. It is a lawful credit control measure, applied in accordance with the approved Credit Control Policy, to recover outstanding municipal debt that currently stands at **N$932.7 million**.

Legal exposure of participants and instigators

Residents are cautioned that a coordinated refusal to pay for services consumed, together with any conduct that accompanies or follows it, may expose participants and instigators to the following:

(a) **Civil liability.** Arrear amounts remain fully recoverable, with interest and recovery costs, through demand, summons and judgment in the competent courts. Property owners remain liable for arrears on their properties in terms of section 78 of the Local Authorities Act, including where a tenant or occupant is in default.

(b) **Criminal liability for tampering and illegal reconnection.** Interfering with meters or metering equipment, bypassing a meter, or restoring a service that has been lawfully discontinued is prohibited under the Electricity Act, 2007 (Act 4 of 2007), the Local Authorities Act and the regulations and by-laws made under them, and may also constitute theft and malicious injury to property at common law. The City will lay criminal charges in every such case.

(c) **Criminal liability for incitement.** Any person who incites, instigates or procures others to commit an offence may be prosecuted for incitement in terms of section 18 of the Riotous Assemblies Act, 1956 (Act 17 of 1956), and the common law. Article 21(2) of the Constitution expressly recognises incitement to an offence as a permissible limit on the exercise of fundamental freedoms.

The City reserves all of its rights, including the right to take legal action against any person who unlawfully obstructs or interferes with the lawful performance of its credit control functions, or who unlawfully induces others to do so.

Consequences for account holders who default

Account holders who stop paying, whether or not as part of an organised campaign, will be treated in terms of the Credit Control Policy. They should expect the following: formal notices of arrears; interest and administrative charges on overdue amounts; restriction or discontinuation of the services in respect of which the account is in arrears, with reconnection only on payment of the arrears and applicable fees; and referral for legal recovery, with the associated legal costs added to the account. The City reaffirms that all disconnections are carried out within the law, including section 31 of the Electricity Act, 2007 in respect of electricity services, as interpreted by the High Court.

Implications for service delivery

The consequences of a payment boycott would not be confined to defaulters. Revenue collected from municipal accounts is what enables the City to procure bulk water and electricity from its suppliers, to maintain and repair reticulation networks, to remove refuse and to keep the city's infrastructure functioning. Widespread non-payment would erode the City's ability to meet its obligations to bulk suppliers and contractors and would place the continuity of supply at risk. Residents should expect, in that event, slower maintenance and repair of water, sewer and electricity infrastructure, deferred capital projects and, ultimately, a threat to the reliability of essential services for every household, business, school and clinic in Windhoek, including those that pay faithfully and on time. Residents who meet their obligations should not be made to bear the cost of those who deliberately do not.

Clarification of the facts

The disconnection exercise targets accounts that are in arrears for **30 days and more**. Customers who have settled their accounts, or who have entered into payment arrangements and continue to honour them, will not be affected.

The suggestion that the City disregards vulnerable residents is incorrect. Between 2023 and 2025, Council approved debt relief interventions amounting to **N$724 million**, of which approximately **N$383.9 million** has already been written off to assist pensioners, orphan-led households and other qualifying residents. The programme remains open. Pensioners and other qualifying residents who have not yet benefited are encouraged to approach the City to establish whether they qualify. Qualifying pensioners must provide proof that the property is registered in their name, and the installation of prepaid services forms part of the programme's conditions, so that beneficiaries can manage their consumption and avoid falling back into unsustainable debt.

The City also rejects the assertion that it has no debt recovery framework. The mass disconnection exercise forms part of that framework, which is designed to secure financial sustainability and the equitable treatment of all account holders.

The City further rejects the claim that its billing system is defective. The 2024 anomaly, which affected a limited number of customer accounts, was detected by the City's own internal processes and corrected promptly, contrary to reports that it was uncovered by community members. A single isolated incident does not establish that the entire billing and revenue management system is defective. That system continues to process thousands of customer accounts under ongoing monitoring and improvement. Allegations of a personal nature directed at the Chief Executive Officer are noted and will not be dignified with a response.

Appeal to residents

The City urges residents not to participate in, support or promote any payment boycott, and not to tamper with meters or reconnect services that have been lawfully discontinued. Anyone who is approached to take part in such conduct, or who has information about tampering or illegal reconnections, is encouraged to report it to the City or to the Namibian Police Force.

Residents who have outstanding accounts, or who are experiencing genuine financial hardship, are encouraged to contact the City of Windhoek debt management division to discuss payment arrangements or to establish whether they qualify for debt relief, before enforcement measures become necessary. Residents who have genuine concerns about their accounts or the City's processes are likewise encouraged to raise them through the City's formal channels or the courts, which remain open to all.

Municipal services are sustained by a partnership between the City and the people it serves. The City will do its part by delivering services, remaining open to dialogue and supporting those who are genuinely in need. We ask residents to do their part by paying for the services they use, and we will not hesitate to enforce the law against those who would undermine that partnership.

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ISSUED BY:
City of Windhoek
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Corporate Communications, Marketing, and Public Participation

For more information about this statement, please contact our Corporate Communications Section at Tel.: 061 290 3797 /2044, or email: cowcommunication@windhoekcc.org.na

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