Invited by Mr Antoine Lefèvre, Chair of the France-Southern Africa inter-parliamentary friendship group, a delegation of the National Council of Namibia, led by its President, Mr Asser Kapere, with Mr Johannes Nakwafila, MP, and Mr Thomas Shipo, Chief Officer to the President, was welcomed in Paris and Picardie from October 5th to 8th, 2015, along with Mr David Thomas, Counsellor of the Embassy of Namibia.

The visit focused on energy production and related waste treatment operations on the one hand, and the promotion of automated cattle breeding on the other hand.

With 2.3 million people scattered over an area one and a half times that of France, Namibia has vast mineral resources (diamonds, copper, uranium, manganese, zinc) as well as significant renewable energy sources.

Leading up to the Paris Conference on climate, the delegation focused on the conditions for the exploitation of such resources, in order to promote an 'econological' approach, namely reconciling ecology and economy. Indeed, the delegation wished to learn about the latest technological advances to preserve those resources and reduce related greenhouse gas emissions in order to sustainably manage its development, especially in urban areas.

I. Uranium: the producer meets the operator

The Namibian delegation visited the 650-hectare site of Areva in Tricastin, in the municipalities of Pierrelatte, Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux and Bollène, in the departments of Drôme and Vaucluse. The group has a special relationship with Namibia, where it has undertaken a uranium mining project. It has also built a seawater desalination plant there, which has been helping to meet the water needs of the Erongo region since 2010.
The visit was an opportunity to show the Namibian MPs the steps following the mining of uranium, since Areva deals with the rest of the nuclear cycle.

Led by Mr Frédéric de Agostini, Director of the Tricastin site, the delegation visited the construction site of the COMURHEX II conversion plant and the Georges Besse II Nord enrichment plant. The former aims to chemically convert the extracted uranium while the latter enriches it for use in a reactor. Both plants meet the highest post-Fukushima standards.

The visitors were also able to review the means implemented for environmental monitoring. Over 33,000 analyses of water, air, fish, plants and sediments among others are carried out annually at 300 monitoring points. Radioactivity levels detected in 2014 were 4,000 times lower than the one-year regulatory limit.

As for the management of radioactive waste from the Tricastin plant, it was stated that 90% of it has a ‘very low intensity’ radiological activity, namely less than 100 becquerels per gram. Packaged on site, the waste is then transferred to a specialized ANDRA disposal route.

Faced with the nuclear market slowdown since Fukushima, the group has chosen to refocus on its core activities – uranium mining, conversion and enrichment. This strategy along with restructuring measures should help to restore its financial stability.

The visit was followed by a meeting in Paris on French-Namibian relations, with Mr Olivier Wantz, Deputy Director General in charge of Mines-Amont activities.

II. Looking for blue gold

With one of the driest climates in Sub-Saharan Africa, and particularly affected by drought, Namibia is sorely lacking water. When visiting one of Veolia’s six research centres in Maisons-Laffitte, the delegation enquired about the latest innovations in terms of exploitation of subterranean groundwater.

Veolia holds over 2000 patents. Mr Jean-Luc Willems did a presentation on drinking water production chains, as well as its networks’ management, describing the processes implemented in relation with desalination platforms.

Also discussed were treatment methods of organic matter in drinking water networks and reusing wastewater to irrigate crops in areas facing water stress.

Veolia Water Research Centre in Maisons-Laffitte

Discussions also focused on circular economy models. Indeed, sustainable development advocated by Veolia links issues related to water, which is required for all industrial processes, with the issues of waste management and energy recovery.

The delegation thus familiarised itself with the recycling, storage and heat treatment of non-hazardous waste.
III. Renewable energy – a strategic issue for Namibia

The Namibian delegation then went to Roye, in the department of Somme, to visit the InnoVent wind farm, managed by Mr Grégoire Verhaeghe. Specialising in the development and exploitation wind and solar farms in France and Africa, the company has built – in four months – a 16-hectare solar park in Omburu, Namibia, which opened on May 8th, 2015. Its annual production amounts to 1% of the electricity generated by Namibia.

Wind turbines at the wind farm in Roye, department of Somme, Picardie region

Mr Verhaeghe welcomes Messrs Kapere and Nakwafila

The meeting focused on the proposed renewable energy facilities that would enable Namibia to achieve total, stable and competitive energy autonomy, while being able to export an energy surplus of 14%.

The program includes building a fleet of 40 solar photovoltaic farms (200 MW), 160 wind turbines (500 MW), 10 biomass plants (50 MW) and 5 hydro-solar plants (50 MW). The wind project, which could provide 40% of Namibia's energy, may be operational within 12 months.

IV. Automation for food security

Welcomed by Mr Stéphane Verscheure, Director of the Departmental Institute of Breeding of the Chamber of Agriculture of the Somme, the delegation discussed cattle breeding and the dairy industry. The cooperative’s organisation highly interested the MPs, since they themselves own cattle farms.

GAEC Niquet farm in Belloy-sur-Somme

In Belloy-sur-Somme, the Namibian delegation then met with Anne-Sophie and Fabien Niquet, operators of an automated cattle farm with about one hundred dairy cows. The Somme department is a pioneer in this field. 10% of dairy farms there are equipped with a milking robot, as opposed to 4% on average in France.

The annual milk production of the Belloy farm amounts to one million litres. The computerisation of milking not only alleviates daily tasks but also allows greater monitoring and health checks. The operating conditions are especially animal-friendly in terms of space, food and milking. Indeed, the farm has 171 hectares of agricultural land providing more than 80% of the dairy cows’ food needs.

V. Successful inter-parliamentary dialogue

The quality of the French-Namibian relationship was reaffirmed during a very warm luncheon hosted by the France-Southern Africa friendship group, chaired by Mr Antoine Lefèvre and Mr René Danési.
Finally, at a hearing, the Namibian delegation met with Mr Jean-Claude Gaudin, Vice-President of the Senate, Chair of the Bureau Delegation for international activities and friendship groups. He was pleased to welcome his Namibian fellow MPs in France two years after a Senate delegation officially visited Namibia.

Members of the Namibian delegation

- Mr Asser Kuveri KAPERE
  President of the National Council
- Mr Johannes NAKWAFILA
  Member of the National Council
- Mr Thomas SHIPO
  Chief Officer

Members of the French delegation

- Mr Jean-Claude GAUDIN
  Vice-President of the Senate
  Senator (The Republicans) of Bouches-du-Rhône
- Mr Antoine LEFÈVRE
  Chair of the France-Southern Africa friendship group
  Senator (The Republicans) of Aisne
- Mr René DANESI
  Deputy Chair of the France-Southern Africa friendship group
  Senator (The Republicans) of Haut-Rhin

Members of the friendship group: [http://www.senat.fr/groupe-interparlementaire-amitie/ami_646.html](http://www.senat.fr/groupe-interparlementaire-amitie/ami_646.html)