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The History of the Geological Survey of Namibia

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While the first, albeit short-lived Mining Commissioner's Office was opened in Otjimbingswe as early as 1889, the roots of the Geological Survey of Namibia go back to 1903 when the first Government Geologist took up his duties in Windhoek. After the discovery of diamonds in 1908, geologists in the service for the then Colonial Government mapped extensively in the southern parts of Namibia. The outbreak of the First World War brought geological activities of the Government to a standstill but the activities of company geologists continued after the surrender of the German troops. Only in 1926 did the Administration of South West Africa request assistance from the Government of the Union of South Africa which exercised a mandate over the region at the time. Subsequently, a branch of the Geological Survey of South Africa headed was opened in Windhoek. Mapping of the territory was the main task of this branch. In 1932, the branch was also given the duty of administering mining legislation and the director was also appointed as Inspector of Mines and Mining Authority. During the Second World War, the branch played an important role in the exploration for strategic minerals.

After the Second World War, when South Africa continued to administer the territory, the search for water became the foremost task in Namibia's arid environment. By the early 1960s a draft of the handbook on the mineral resources was completed. In 1963, the branch was upgraded to a sub-office of the Geological Survey of South Africa under and in 1965 the first 1:1 million geological map of Namibia was published.

Subsequently, a coal drilling programme was carried out in the Ovambo Basin, offshore petroleum exploration began and a revised issue of the 1:1 million geological map of Namibia was initiated. In 1979, the Geological Survey became an independent Directorate in the Department of Economic Affairs of the Administration of South West Africa. While hydrogeology was transferred from the Geological Survey to the Department of Water Affairs, the activities of the Geological Survey centred on mapping, particularly in the complex Damara Orogen. Descriptions of the stratigraphy of Namibia were published and a new inventory of the mineral resources of the

country was compiled. The revised 1:1 million geological map was published in 1981. Several 1:250 000 maps followed, cooperative projects with universities greatly expanded, and the flow of publications on regional geology significantly increased. The draft of the Mineral Resources Handbook was revised but permission for publication was withheld, for political reasons.

Following Namibian Independence, the Geological Survey of Namibia was made a Directorate within the Ministry of Mines and Energy. Numerous cooperative projects with foreign countries were initiated. The totally revised, restructured and updated Mineral Resources Handbook was



finally published and planning of the present Geological Survey building started. Today, the Geological Survey of Namibia is a modern research institution with excellent facilities. Tasks include mapping, geophysics, remote sensing, cartography, economic geology, geochemistry, engineering geology and environmental geology. Research data are accessible through data bases and disseminated in digital as well as conventional formats. The Geological Survey of Namibia also operates the National Earth Science Museum and the National Energy and Earth Science Information Centre [1].

The Geological Survey of Namibia

[1] SCHNEIDER GIC (2002) Communs Geol. Surv. Namibia, 12:1-12

