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The Namibian Lithium Question — Summary Edition

Six ministries, three policy instruments, one thinning ecosystem — and what's actually happening.

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This is the condensed edition of Brief No. 03. The full edition, with complete sourcing and verification notes, is available at koussiintelligence.com.

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Executive Summary

Namibia's critical minerals position rests on three policy instruments issued by three different ministries and enforced through ministerial discretion rather than codified law. The Minerals Beneficiation Strategy sits at the Ministry of Industrialisation and Trade. The 6 June 2023 Cabinet Decision on unprocessed mineral exports is enforced by the Ministry of Industries, Mines and Energy. National Development Plan 6, launched 21 July 2025, is owned by the National Planning Commission. None is embedded in a statute. None carries a hard deadline of the kind that anchors Zimbabwe's regime.

Beneath this policy stack, the lithium ecosystem has thinned considerably since 2024. Lepidico Limited, the Australian-listed operator of the Karibib project, was wound up in August 2025 following a May 2025 creditor vote to liquidate; the Karibib asset sits under a conditional option to a Canadian junior, International Lithium Corp, with an adverse Singapore arbitration ruling hanging over the transaction. Xinfeng Investments Namibia, whose mining

licence was revoked in April 2023 and reinstated by the High Court in June 2023, admitted in December 2024 to mining beyond its licensed area at Uis and continues to operate. Andrada Mining's Uis operation is the sole Namibian lithium project producing commercial concentrate at meaningful grade.

Around this operational picture, the diplomatic architecture is substantial and largely delivered on non-lithium substance. The EU-Namibia partnership, signed at COP-27 in November 2022, mobilised €1 billion in commitments, but its concrete lithium-specific deliverable to date is a Walvis Bay port study. US engagement is publicly active but carries no committed capital in the Namibian lithium sector. This brief maps the picture and lets the reader reach their own conclusions.

The Policy Architecture

Namibia's critical minerals position is spread across three instruments owned by three different arms of government, none with statutory force.

The **Minerals Beneficiation Strategy (2021-2030)** was issued by the Ministry of Industrialisation and Trade — not the mines ministry — and sets the 2030 beneficiation horizon without enforcement powers or a fixed critical minerals list. The **6 June 2023 Cabinet Decision** prohibits export of unprocessed lithium, cobalt, manganese, graphite, and rare earths, but is a Cabinet decision rather than legislation, with no hard deadline and a discretionary carve-out permitting "smaller quantities" at ministerial discretion. **National Development Plan 6**, launched July 2025 by the National Planning Commission, targets raising processed mineral exports from 46.6% to 57% by 2030, requiring N\$505 billion — roughly 2.5 times annual GDP.

No single document integrates these three. Beneath them, the Minerals (Prospecting and Mining) Act 1992 remains the foundational statute. Independent legal reference (ICLG, September 2025) confirms the Act "contains no fixed statutory quotas" for beneficiation — the commonly-cited 30% local-processing requirement is a discretionary licence condition applied case by case, not a legislated quota. Enforcement rests entirely on ministerial discretion under Sections 48 and 50. The same discretion that enables enforcement enables its indefinite deferral.

The International Postures

The EU signed a €1 billion strategic partnership with Namibia in November 2022, endorsed a roadmap in October 2023, and is delivering — but principally on renewable hydrogen and Walvis Bay port infrastructure, not lithium. The European Council on Foreign Relations noted in July 2025 that Namibia "has received less attention from mineral investors" than the diplomatic profile suggests. The EU's lithium-specific substance is thin.

The US posture, led by Ambassador John Giordano, is publicly active — an April 2026 embassy summit urged Namibia to move "from potential to execution." But no US operator holds a producing Namibian lithium licence, and the one substantial US commitment — a US\$50 million DFC facility to Lepidico's Karibib project in 2023 — lapsed undrawn when Lepidico collapsed. US engagement is rhetoric ahead of capital.

China's lithium-specific presence centres on a single contested operator, Xinfeng. Its mining licence was revoked in April 2023 for alleged fraud in the application, reinstated by the High Court in June 2023 on the grounds that the minister lacked unilateral revocation power, and in December 2024 Xinfeng admitted to mining beyond its licensed scope at Uis after an inspection found illegally-mined ore mixed with legal production. It continues to

operate. The Xinfeng file is the clearest illustration of what discretion-based enforcement produces in practice: identified breach, admitted breach, continued operation. (China's wider footprint in Namibian critical minerals beyond lithium is a candidate for a subsequent brief.)

The Operational Reality

At the operational level the Namibian lithium sector is smaller than a survey of listed companies suggests. Four entities have lithium-relevant activity:

Andrada Mining (AIM, Guernsey-incorporated) is the only operator producing commercial-grade concentrate at scale, from its Uis tin-tantalum-lithium complex, with a Lithium Ridge drilling programme expanded to 16,500 metres and high-grade intercepts through mid-2026. Any assessment of actual Namibian lithium production capacity begins and largely ends here.

Karibib — Namibia's second-largest known lithium resource (~773,000 tonnes) — is in legal limbo. Its operator Lepidico was wound up in August 2025. The asset now sits under a conditional option to Canadian junior International Lithium Corp, complicated by a 29 December 2025 Singapore arbitration ruling adverse to the Namibian entity in an offtake dispute with a Chinese counterparty. Its next move depends entirely on decisions taken outside Namibia.

Xinfeng continues producing lithium ore at Uis, but with undisclosed volumes, undocumented export destinations, and contested regulatory status — a category distinct from Andrada's audited, exchange-reported production.

Askari Metals (ASX) is a credible exploration-stage story near Uis with strong assay results, but first production, if any, would fall in the early 2030s. It does not affect the near-term picture.

The Strategic Read

Three tensions run through the evidence. First, between **rhetoric and enforcement**: Namibia has a clear stated lithium-beneficiation policy, but it operates through instruments that permit indefinite deferral, as the Xinfeng case demonstrates. Second, between **diplomatic profile and commercial substance**: a heavy multi-bloc diplomatic footprint sits above a thin operational base — one scaled producer, one stranded asset, one contested operator, one early explorer. Third, between **sovereign policy and the location of decision-making**: on none of the principal Namibian lithium assets does effective control sit in Windhoek — the decisions are taken in Guernsey, Vancouver, Mauritius, and contested Chinese-owned structures.

Five signals over the next twelve to eighteen months would materially change the picture: whether the ILC option on Karibib is exercised or lapses; whether the mines ministry takes further formal action on Xinfeng; whether Andrada moves to a commercial production decision; whether any operator announces a domestic lithium processing facility; and whether the EU roadmap adds concrete lithium deliverables. Taken together, these will determine whether the current picture is a transitional state or a stable equilibrium of ambition exceeding capacity.

The evidence supports either reading. Anyone taking a position on Namibian lithium is choosing between them.

Methodology and Sources

This summary edition condenses Brief No. 03. The full edition contains complete sourcing, verification notes, and editorial disclosures. Koussi Intelligence is an AI-leveraged open-source intelligence publication; all substantive claims are verified against primary sources prior to publication. Koussi takes no positions in the commodities discussed and provides no investment advice. Full sources and methodology: koussiintelligence.com. Enquiries: admin@koussiintelligence.com.