

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**Statement by His Excellency Dr Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of
Namibia on the occasion of the 26th Independence Day Celebration**

Windhoek

March 21, 2016

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On this day, in 1990, our Founding Father, Comrade Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma, concluded his inaugural speech with the following remark, "I move in the name of the people, to declare that Namibia is forever free, sovereign and independent." With these words, Comrade Nujoma had paved the way for Namibia to begin its journey of Independence which has resulted in over two decades of peace, stability and unity. It is this day that we are celebrating today. Now, after 26 years, we are still enjoying freedom and enjoying our sovereignty.

Director of Ceremonies;

Your Excellency, Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, President of the Republic of Mali;

Your Excellency, Founding Father, Comrade Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma;

Your Excellency, Comrade Hifikepunye Lucas Pohamba;

Your Highness Sheikh Saud Bin Saqr Al Qasimi, Ruler of Ras Al Khaimah;

Comrade Nickey Iyambo, Vice President of the Republic of Namibia;

The Right Honourable Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia;

Honourable Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation; Former Heads of State and Government;

Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly;

Your Honour, Chief Justice of the Republic of Namibia;

Honourable Deputy Chairperson of the National Council;

Honourable Ministers from Mali and Namibia;

Honourable Members of Parliament;

The First Ladies of the Republic of Namibia and Republic of Mali;

Distinguished Service Chiefs;

Honourable Governors;

Leaders of Political Parties;

Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Traditional and Spiritual Leaders;

Distinguished Invited Guests;

Members of the Media;

Fellow Namibians;

I would like to extend a warm welcome to my brother, and our Guest of Honour, His Excellency Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, President of the Republic of Mali, Madam Aminata Maiga Keïta, First Lady of Mali and the entire delegation from the Republic of Mali. We are honoured to welcome our friends, who have travelled a long distance to join us in the spirit of Pan African Solidarity, as we celebrate our Independence Day.

Let me also welcome several other special guests and friends from Africa and further afield who have graced this occasion with their presence. I acknowledge the presence of His Highness Sheikh Saud Bin Saqr Al Qasimi, Ruler of Ras Al Khaimah; His Excellency Rupiah Bwezani Banda, former President of the Republic of Zambia; and His Excellency Salim Ahmed Salim former Prime Minister

of the United Republic of Tanzania and Secretary General of the Organization of African Unity.

We are grateful to all of you, for having decided to be with us, at this joyous occasion.

As a nation, we pride ourselves for the principles of Democracy, Unity, Peace and Stability and the Rule of Law that we enjoy. These principles form part of a foundation characterized by a sound and robust Governance Architecture, which is globally recognized and lauded. This legacy was initiated by our founding father, who brought us peace and reconciliation, allowing us to heal the wounds of the past and build a democratic system in which every citizen feels safe and has a sense of belonging. It is under this system that we have held several regular and peaceful democratic elections.

Subsequently, our Founding Father passed the torch on to another icon, Comrade Hifikepunye Pohamba, who continued to stabilize the country's democratic foundation and today, that legacy continues through, Yours Truly, who is tasked with bringing prosperity to the people.

Pan African Icon Kwame Nkrumah once said, "We are going to demonstrate to the world, to the other nations, that we are prepared to lay our foundation – our own African personality." Through gaining Independence, and establishing the legacy of three leaders, who I refer to as the trinity, Namibia has demonstrated

to the world, to other nations, that we are prepared to lay our foundation – our own, Namibian and African Personality. And I tell you, that this legacy will continue for years to come.

There are some – and they are a small minority - that would like to suggest that no progress was made since independence and that Government spending priorities are not rightly placed. During my State of the Nation address, I will dedicate adequate time in order to provide my rebuttal to this wrongly placed notion. Let me however, highlight two or three facts that prove that pre independence Namibia and post-independence Namibia are drastically different. Firstly, with regards to the economy, it is noteworthy that in 1990, our GDP, measured at current market prices at that time stood at a mere N\$5.5 billion. Per capita GDP was only N\$2, 425 in 1990 Namibia. At present, our GDP at current prices has increased to N\$141 billion, an increase of 25 times. At the same time, per capita GDP has increased to N\$63,000 by 2014. In 1990 our manufacturing sector was worth only N\$290 million; it has increased to N\$15 billion. That is not all, the total budget tabled in 1990 was N\$2 billion and the capital or development budget only N\$254 million. In this current fiscal year, the capital budget alone is worth N\$9 billion, and we will spend on student funding through the Namibia Students Financial Assistance Fund N\$1.2 billion. The education and health sectors continues to receive the bulk of state resources. If this does not indicate our intent to earmark these sectors as priority sectors, then we don't know what priority is.

There are those that have questioned the spending on our armed forces. Let me say that during the past few weeks I have visited all headquarters of our armed forces. After what I witnessed, I can proclaim with confidence, that the professionalism, patriotism and expertise of our men and women of the armed forces is exceptional. I have been hugely impressed. Our troops not only safeguard our peace and security, but also contribute towards peace keeping on the African continent. In other nations the armed forces are lauded and looked upon with immense pride, but some here in Namibia think differently.

It pains me to see the conditions under which so many of our uniformed men and women live, and if need be we will increased resources to see to it that they are provided with decent accommodation befitting of their sacrifices and service. This also applies to our teachers, nurses, doctors and other professionals who selflessly serve the Land of the Brave.

Despite the global economic slowdown witnessed over the past several years, Namibia's economy has continued to grow at an average 5% in recent years. Our Macro-Economic Architecture is sound and characterized by decades of growth and stability, but it is pertinent that we now focus our attention on our Socio-Economic architecture where there are still gaps.

We are aware that holding bragging rights on peace, stability and rule of law can only take one so far, but if one does not feed the people, those bragging rights can become a thing of nightmares. After 26 years, it is time to focus on the

objective of prosperity for all. It is with this thought in mind that a year ago, I announced that the Namibian Government was declaring all-out war on poverty.

I am therefore proud to stand before you today, a day which also marks my first year in office as President, to state that during the past year, I have endeavored to look for common rallying points through slogans and catchwords such as “No Namibian Should Feel Left Out”, “War on Poverty”, “One Namibia, One Nation”, “Namibian House” and “Harambee”. This was done with the knowledge that it is only through embracing our sense of togetherness, national identity and unity, that we can tackle the huge task of eradicating poverty. If we don’t pull in the same direction, then we risk the unenviable situation of pulling ourselves apart. Henry Ford encapsulated the essence of team work by saying the following, “Coming together is the beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success.”

Under “One Namibia, One Nation”, we come together, under the concept of “No Namibian should feel left out”, we stay together and progress, and under the spirit of “Harambee” we work together to achieve success. Success will mean we have built a “Namibian House” in which every Namibian shall be able to pursue the goal of individual and collective prosperity.

As Government, we have taken tangible actions to signify our intent on tackling poverty. We established the Ministry of Poverty Eradication, which will oversee and consolidate all Government’s efforts in tackling poverty. Staying true to the

principle of Open Government, we organized Town Hall meetings in all 14 regions, where we engaged you, the citizenry, in order to receive a first-hand account of the problems that you are facing.

These consultations continued, and over the past several weeks, I have held meetings with numerous stakeholders from all spheres, including various economic sectors, media, politics and religion. We have not forgotten our promise to you, to follow up on the many pertinent issues you raised during these consultations, and at present, we are formulating wide ranging and comprehensive responses to your needs. It is said that failing to plan is tantamount to planning to fail. There we dedicated our time during 2015 to formulating our plans.

This year, 2016, is the year of implementation. Along with our declaration of war against poverty, we have also declared war on corruption and its root causes. I am committed to the policy of transparency and in this regard I would like to inform all business people and entrepreneurs from inside and outside of the country – Don't try to negotiate with me on tenders and deals.

There is no leeway for negotiating business deals, contracts or tenders with the President of this Republic. Tens of thousands of Namibian patriots laid down their lives, shed their precious blood, suffered imprisonment and a difficult life in exile so that we could become an independent nation. We cannot defile the memory of these valiant sons and daughters by practicing corruption.

Business people should adhere to the policy of approaching respective line ministers in order to submit their proposals and allow our multilayered decision making process to take effect. It is for this reason that we have worked on a New Public Procurement Bill which will ensure that the public procurement system is transparent and efficient.

Urgency is needed in fighting poverty and corruption. Expectations are high and the people are watching the Government. Therefore a new culture of time consciousness must prevail. Meetings must start on time and should not drag on longer than required. As head of state, I should lead by example, and I do this through my Cabinet meetings which are always on time, allowing Ministers to go back to their respective duty stations to work on the task of bringing prosperity to the people. I thank the ministers for having bought into the culture of time consciousness.

In terms of improving transparency and performance within our Government, we promised to deliver and we have. I am proud to state that to date, all Cabinet Ministers have submitted their Declarations of Intent on time. These declarations constitute a promise by the ministers to the public as to what they plan to achieve during the next five years. They also feed into the performance agreements of the ministers, which I am also proud to say, have been submitted on time. These performance agreements speak to the objectives of government and have been made available for public scrutiny.

It is pleasing to note that the first quarterly review of the performance agreements has taken place and based on the analysis, we are confident that ministers are embracing the new culture of performance management with open arms. This attitude will go a long way in improving performance in Government and although there are a few teething problems, the culture is evolving and we can be proud of this good first attempt, knowing that we will see improvement over time. I therefore, express my appreciation for the efforts, appreciation and willingness of all ministers to participate in this process. You have exuded the spirit of Harambee.

Looking over the past 26 years, we can confidently say that as a nation, we have made significant progress in our developmental trajectory. Bringing about prosperity is the next frontier in our struggle for economic emancipation, and we have a strategy in place to pursue this objective.

The Harambee Prosperity Plan, which is built on the pillars of Effective Governance, Economic Development, Social Development and Infrastructure Development, will build on the progress that we have made to date and present the first practical steps over the next four years on how we intend to deliver on our promise. I will unpack this plan during my State of the Nation address in a fortnight's time.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates and fellow Namibians,

After 26 years, Namibia's democracy has reached a level of maturity which allows us to reflect on our past achievements, identify shortcomings and plan for the future, knowing that due to our unity as a people, we stand on a solid foundation that will support our future endeavors and aspirations. As I conclude, I urge all Namibians to cherish the house we have built over these past 26 years, the house that God has earmarked for all Namibian men and women, girls and boys no matter what you look like or what language you speak.

Let us celebrate our unity without uniformity and diversity without fragmentation. There is an African proverb which says, "A family tie is like a tree, it can bend but it cannot break." On this 26th day of independence, let us reaffirm our ties as the Namibian family, living in the Namibian House. We are united and although we might bend, we will never be broken.

Long live the spirit of Harambee - Long Live the concept of No Namibian must feel left out – Long live the Namibian House - Long Live the Land of the Brave - One Namibia, One Nation. Happy Birthday Namibia.