RESPONSE TO MR. EMMANUEL PAMWENASE HANGULAH "MANUNU"S OPEN LETTER TO H.E. PRESIDENT HAGE G. GEINGOB ON MATTERS RELATED TO VETERANS OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION STRUGGLE AS CIRCULATED ON VARIOUS SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

In his letter, Mr. Hangulah claims that the veterans of the National Liberation Struggle under and during the tenure of H.E. President Hage G. Geingob, when he took over the office as Namibia’s third President are forgotten and that they did not receive their Individual Veterans Projects (IVP) money of N$200 000.00.

These remarks by Mr. Hangulah, are not only inconceivable and misleading to the veterans’ community and the general public at large, but are indeed devoid of any truth.

Further, for Mr. Hangulah to opine that the current administration is overlooking the plight of the veterans of the National Liberation struggle is indeed far fetched and therefore cannot be left unchallenged.

It is against this background that the Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs hereby takes this opportunity to respond, clarify and set the record straight regarding the mentioned allegations and explain our programmes and activities aimed at addressing the plight of veterans.

Since its inception the then Ministry of Veterans Affairs has been mandated to initiate, promote and implement programmes, projects and activities that are aimed at integrating the veterans into the socio-economic mainstream of the country. A task that remains a top priority of government to date.

In 2015, when H.E. President Hage G. Geingob took Office as Namibia’s third democratically elected President, He felt it necessary to align some government
institutions and Veterans Affairs was one such that was realigned and placed directly under the Office of the Vice President's in the Presidency.

In this respect, Veterans, Marginalised Communities and Disability Affairs were the three government departments that Dr. Hage G. Geingob gave prominence to be elevated to the Presidency. The President's action in this regard should be seen in the light of the importance that H.E. attaches to special categories of our society.

As a clarification to the assertion on the non-payment of Individual Veterans Projects (IVPs), it is noteworthy to mention that it has nothing to do with the alleged overlooking of veterans by the President, but is due to the fact that, since the inception of this programme in 2010, a low record of applications was received due to the negative perception towards the IVPs amongst veterans, who instead preferred cash pay-out. Following concerted efforts by Veterans Affairs to encourage veterans to engage themselves in economic activities through IVPs, a high number of applications was then received from 2012, which unfortunately coincided with the global economic downturn. Hence, the backlog currently being experienced by Veterans Affairs in terms of IVP funding is a direct consequence of that.

Secondly, it must be noted that Namibia just like other countries across the globe has been experiencing economic challenges and, as a result, the funding of a number of government projects and programs were downscaled due to the economic downturn being experienced worldwide. It should therefore be understood that the operations of the whole government are affected and not just those of Veterans Affairs. As a result, the funding of IVPs was also affected.

We therefore would like to advise Mr. Hangulah to familiarise himself with the Veterans Act No. 2 of 2008 as amended in 2013, and the regulations thereof on various projects and programs being offered to veterans.

For the purpose of understanding, below are the benefits to veterans of the National Liberation Struggle administered by Veterans Affairs.

1. **Provision of Financial Assistance:**

The purpose of the financial assistance is to assist veterans of the national liberation struggle to afford the basic necessities of life in order to sustain themselves and their families. This is divided into three (3) categories, namely; Lump Sum, Subvention and Improvement Welfare grants.

a. **Lump Sum:** The lump sum is paid to all registered veterans regardless of their employment status. Those who began participating in the activities of the liberation struggle between 1959 to 1987 receive a lump sum of N$ 50 000 while those that began their liberation struggle activities between 1988 to 1989 are paid a lump sum of N$ 20 000.
b. **Subvention Grant:** This assistance in the form of a monthly financial assistance of N$2 200, given to all registered veterans, who are either unemployed, retired, disabled or those that earn an annual income of N$ 36 000 per annum or less.

c. **Improvement of Welfare Grant:** This assistance was introduced in 2015 in addition to the Subvention Grant and is given to Ex-PLAN combatants that were militarily trained and deployed, former Robben Island and Kai //Ganaxab political prisoner's veterans that are unemployed. The Improvement Grant is paid in three categories: those that participated from 1960 to 1970 receive N$5,000, those that participated from 1971 to 1981 receive N$4000, while those that participated from 1982 to 1989 receive N$3000.

2. **Provision of Individual Veterans Projects (IVPs):**

Any registered veteran that is interested may apply for project funding of his/her own choice for an amount of up to a maximum of NS 200 000. The application is then scrutinized by the Veterans Board for consideration before it is approved and subsequently funded.

3. **Provision of Houses for Veterans:**

The housing benefit is aimed at providing decent shelter and accommodation to eligible veterans that are living in deplorable conditions. Veterans Affairs provides standard housing units consisting of three (3) bedrooms, a kitchen, living and dining room, a flushing toilet and a bathroom or shower.

4. **Provision of Land for Resettlement:**

This programme is aimed at assisting landless veterans to acquire land to undertake economic activities in order to contribute towards the country's economic growth and improve their livelihoods and that of their families.

5. **Education and Training Grant:**

This benefit is provided to interested veterans and dependents who wish to pursue academic or vocational training at accredited institutions of higher learning in Namibia and elsewhere. A veteran can be funded until Doctorate level, while dependents are only funded when pursuing their undergraduate qualifications and should be under the age of 21 years at the time of application.

6. **Provision for funeral grant and erection of tombstone erection:**

This benefit is provided to assist families of deceased veterans to accord respectable and dignified burials to the deceased veterans. In addition, Veterans Affairs also makes provision for the erection of tombstones on the graves of the deceased veterans.
7. **Provision for medical assistance:**

This benefit is aimed at assisting Veterans of the national liberation struggle whose health condition cannot be managed by State Health Facilities by paying their medical expenses at private health facilities upon recommendation by a state Medical Officer.

8. **Provision for psychosocial support and spiritual counselling:**

The struggle for our independence was a long and bitter one, and the effects of the war has left many Namibians with economic, health, social and psychological problems; hence Veterans Affairs facilitates in-house counselling and some in instances pays for counselling sessions conducted by private counselling service providers. Furthermore, Veterans Affairs has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN) for the provision of spiritual counselling to veterans.

It is also imperative to note that Veterans Affairs has Social Workers stationed in different regions to attend to social challenges that veterans are facing. Their duties include paying regular home and hospital visits to provide continuous social support to veterans and address their needs.

The government under the leadership of H.E. President H.G. Geingob, through the Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs which is the institution responsible for coordinating government efforts on matters relating to the Veterans of the National Liberation Struggle is committed to implementing all activities, programmes and projects to ensure successful execution of our mandate. This includes the funding of outstanding IVPs.

We therefore call on veterans and the nation to remain calm and patient.

Comm (rtd) Trephine P. Kamati  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR