

MOTION

02/03 2021

ON THE STATE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN NAMIBIA

Hon Speaker Fellow Honorable Members of Parliament I hereby implore this August House to discuss the issue surrounding the State of Local Authorities in Namibia. This Motion come at a very timely and important period in our country as Namibians went to the Polls last year on Nov 25 to elect their new Local Authorities Councilors amongst others.

However the reality after voting them into office will surely be that Namibians will start demanding from their elected councilors to deliver basic services to them ,but is the ground fertile enough and do this councilors have the means at their disposals to carry out their mandate or not?

Right from the onset I must state emphatically that this issue is not a right or wrong issue, it is not an issue for anyone including myself to try and score political points, however it is a very important issue that must be discussed honestly and with tact and foresightedness as it is an issue that affect the live hood of many Namibians at the Local Authority Level.

It is important that we discuss this issue with the outmost care because Local Authorities are important elements of the Namibian Governance System, primarily because they are tasked with bringing government closer to the people in terms of service delivery and development at the grassroots level.

Furthermore Because Local Authorities are responsible for the provision of an extensive range of public services in those specific areas. In addition local authorities promotes the interest of local communities, including the social, economic, environmental, recreational, cultural, community or general development in that area.

Hon Speaker the Local Authority Act 23 of 1992 has detailed the functions and duties of Local Authorities in Namibia. It is a document worth reading as it details the Nature and Scope of Local Authorities in Namibia.

However this Act is a total contraction of itself in many respect, especially when it comes to the issue of bureaucracy. Is the current act still relevant 29 years after the first promulgation, does this Act still respond t increased needs and wants of Local Authorities? My answer to the above is a Big No.

It is my submission that this Act is out of tune with the ever increasing complexities of the Local Authority Sector. We can trace the word Bureacracy from a French Physiocrat Gournay in a letter to a colleague dated July 1 1764, who proposed "Bureacracie" to identify a new form of government to add to Aristotles three basic forms of Monarchy, Aristocracy and Democracy.

However Marx will see bureaucracy as a tool for the authoritarian rule of the bourgeoisie, Rosa Luxemburg and Trosky opposed it as the main dominant trait of the Leninist and Stalinist party. In my opinion however bureaucracy is a self referential and self serving corps, it is a system of government the control of which is soo completely in the hands of officials that their power jeopardizes the liberties of ordinary citizens.

Hon Speaker my contention is that our Local Authority Act of 1992 and with the subsequent amendments are tailored made to control local authorities with impunity and to make the Ministers all too powerful to control, to reward and to punish with impunity those he or she disagree with.

The Vertical Axis of our matrix that should be known by any student of political science point to the fact that there are two main options or channels through which bureaucracy can be created which are patronage and elite.

I therefore content that the problem with our dysfunctional Local Authorities lies squarely with the wording in that Act, that give too excessive powers to the Line Minister, that result in local authorities not being able to execute their functions properly.

Equally there seems to be power struggle with every Minister that comes as many of this Ministers want to retain control on finances of the Local Authorities and putting in bureaucratic measures that makes the work of local authorities so difficult to carry out.

We have to ask serious questions if we are to address this issue, such as How much money does Central Government really bump into Local Authorities? Is this money sufficient for the Local Authorities to carry out their functions properly? Why does the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development continue to put into place policies and to issue directives that at the end of the day hampers the smooth running of local authorities?

What has happened to the policy of Decentralization? Why are policies directions that can be taken at a local authority level still being made the responsibility of the Ministry, that results in delays in approving land transactions and other matter because of the bureaucratic nature of the Ministry policies towards Local Authorities?

Hon speaker many of our Municipalities, Town Council and Village Councils are treated like nobby kids, that must ask permission from the line Ministry before they approve a number of service related issues, has this not proven to be counter productive over all this years as it delay the process of service delivery to our communities.

Hon Speaker fellow Members the other issue that continue to be a deterrent for Local Authorities to perform their work effectively is the fact that many Local Authorities Councilors are really underpaid. In this ever changing world with inflation many Councilors salaries have not been adjusted for a very long period now, yet the cost of living continues to increase on a daily basis.

It is time that we re-look this issue of remunerations of this Councillors as a matter of fact.

Equally the work load of work especially at Part 1 Municipalities continues to be a serious problem. The term part time councilors is so outdated as there is nothing part time especially at Part 1 Municipalities as this Councillors are forever busy at the City Chambers from Morning till late.

On one hand you have elected councilors who went to the polls and got elected, however as far as the Act is concerned there are officials in the line Ministry who yield so much power, either to approve their submissions or to reject them. All this boils down to my earlier assertion that bureaucracy is very rife in the Line Ministry as projects and submissions that should take only few days or a month to be approved, usually take up to six months or a year before being approved.

This renders the whole cycle of service delivery useless and untenable to say the least.

Hon Speaker, Hon Members another point is the Power vested in the line Minister by this Act, this Minister is not Elected by the Residents yet he yields so much power that he can decide to suspend a serving councilor or disband the whole Local Authority at will. This provision in that Act is a serious contraction and it must be revisited as well.

It is a fact that this Act is to be blamed for the ever increasing bureaucratic conundrum in which many of our Local Authorities find themselves in.

However on close scrutiny it is becoming evident that for the past 29 years or so, most of our local authorities fail to deliver on their mandate to provide basic services to our people. The question is why?

I strongly believe that in this August House there are many former Mayors and Former Councilors who can testify to the fact that there is a dire need to reform Local Authorities in Namibia. In fact those of us who have served in Local Authorities in Namibia will be guilty and it will be a travesty of Justice if we fail to enlighten this house and to educate as well as to inform other members of this House on the dire need of local authorities in Namibia.

For starters Central Government seems to not take local authorities seriously by giving meagre resources to this very important Ministry Urban and Rural development, which is the custodian of Local Authorities in Namibia.

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Secretary General

If we are to make sure that they deliver sufficient, equitable and quick service to their respective residents it is high time that this Act must be amended to make sure that we have Full time councilors, who will devout their time and energy to the work at hand.

With soo much shortcomings and work that lies ahead in particular, houses provisions and so forth, we cannot afford to continue to have part time councilors going forward.

I therefore would like to implore this August House to debate this Motion thoroughly and to come up with remedial suggestions and proposals in the interest of a prosperous Namibia for all.

I thank you

Hon Josef Kauandenge

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All correspondence must be addressed to the Secretary General.

