

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



THE PRESIDENCY

**STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS
BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. HAGE G. GEINGOB,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

WINDHOEK

June 4, 2020

Check against delivery

- **Honourable Professor Peter Katjavivi, Speaker of the National Assembly and Madame Katjavivi;**
- **Honourable Victoria Kauma, Vice Chairperson of the National Council;**
- **Right Honourable Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, Prime Minister and Leader of Government Business in Parliament;**
- **Comrade Sophia Shaningwa, Secretary General of the Ruling SWAPO Party;**
- **Honourable McHenry Venaani, Leader of the Official Opposition;**
- **Honourable Members of Parliament;**

Special Guests:

- **Comrade Nangolo Mbumba, Vice President of the Republic of Namibia;**
- **Your Lordship, Chief Justice Peter Shivute;**
- **Madame Monica Geingos, First Lady of the Republic of Namibia;**
- **Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps;**
- **Distinguished Invited Guests;**
- **Members of the Media;**
- **Fellow Namibians,**

2020 - THE YEAR OF INTROSPECTION

During my inauguration on March 21, I took an Oath before God and before you, to strive to the best of my ability, to uphold, protect and defend the Constitution and to obey, execute and administer the laws of the Republic of Namibia. I took an oath to protect the independence, territorial integrity and the material and spiritual resources of the Republic of Namibia. I swore that I would endeavour to the best of my ability to work towards justice for all the inhabitants of Namibia. Therefore I stand before you today, in fulfillment of my constitutional mandate, to deliver the first State of the Nation Address of my second and last term as President of the Republic of Namibia.

I would like to thank the members of the 6th Parliament of Namibia under the leadership of the Speaker and his Deputy, for their invaluable contributions to our democracy and nation building.

I congratulate the re-elected Speaker, his Deputy, the leader of the Official Opposition and all leaders, especially the newcomers to this 7th Parliament; an outcome of our peaceful and democratic Presidential and National Assembly elections of November 2019.

**Honourable Speaker,
Members of Parliament,**

While the past five years have been challenging as a result of the global economic downturn and protracted drought, the past four months have been particularly daunting. All of humanity has been affected by COVID-19 and there is no doubt that survival will require a collective effort. Our lives have been disrupted and our financial security placed in jeopardy, with uncertainty and anxiety looming large.

Fellow Namibians, I share in your anxieties. I understand your distress as breadwinners of our households. Many of you may lose or have already lost your income. I sympathize with you.

I understand the pain of our small and large business owners and entrepreneurs, whose businesses have closed or face the risk of closure due to economic pressures.

I share the concerns of our learners, students and youth, whose academic year has been upended by this crisis. I also understand the frustration of graduates who face fewer economic opportunities under the prevailing circumstances.

I share the plight of the poor and the vulnerable, who face sleepless nights because of homelessness and hunger.

This is the defining hour for this generation. This is the challenge of our time. One, we must overcome as a united people. Namibians will endure, if we stand firm in unity of purpose, if we take collective action to build a better society, if we all ascribe to the admirable principles of humanity that galvanized our struggle for independence. Only then will we rise above the limitations of this crisis, to take this nation towards a prosperous economic future.

**Honourable Speaker,
Members of Parliament,**

Despite the highly contested and spirited campaigns that preceded the November 2019 elections, we are all gathered here, united in our collective responsibility to safeguard the wellbeing of all Namibians. Faced with the realities of today, a significant task awaits you. As in every healthy democracy, I expect lively discourse, as you deliberate on how best to steer our country towards a future of shared prosperity. However, let us bear in mind that there are no enemies in this House. The enemies we face are those that pose a danger to all Namibians: namely unemployment, low economic growth, infectious diseases, inadequate shelter, corruption, crime, Gender Based Violence and other scourges that threaten the socio-economic fabric of our society.

The Sovereigns elected us to defend our hard won liberty, to maintain national unity and deliver justice in the Namibian House. In this regard, we must collectively commit to fulfilling this obligation, through regular attendance of sessions, robust Parliamentary debate and active Committee discussions. Let us maintain decorum and uphold a high standard of conduct in this beacon of our Democracy.

I am here today to fulfill my constitutional duty, attending Parliament to deliver this accountability report to the People of Namibia, and respond to questions in relation thereto.

In accordance with the special hybrid nature of our Parliament, the Head of State is not a Member of Parliament, but is directly elected by a single constituency, the Electorate. The Right Hon. Prime Minister as leader of Government business in Parliament, assisted by Ministers, is constitutionally mandated to participate in parliamentary debate and provide responses as required.

Honourable Speaker,

Fellow Namibians,

END OF FIRST TERM REPORT

We have come to the end of the first term of this Government and I will present a progress report highlighting key accomplishments and challenges encountered over the term. The details are presented in the Harambee Prosperity Plan final report that has been distributed. I will also outline the plan of Government for the second term.

Upon inauguration on March 21, 2015, I declared all-out war against poverty, income and wealth inequalities, and corruption, in the quest to achieve more inclusive growth and shared prosperity.

The noble goal of eradicating poverty was perceived by some to be too ambitious. However, we must dream big and be bold in the pursuit of our lofty

ideals. Considering the significant inroads made in poverty reduction since independence, I remain confident that with sufficient resources and concerted efforts, Namibia can one day achieve the goal of a more equal society.

The burning desire to overcome the limitations that confine our people to poverty, inequality and undignified life, compelled us to formulate the Harambee Prosperity Plan, as a tool to fast-track development and draw us closer to the attainment of our National Development Plans and Vision 2030. The four-year impact plan was formulated following countrywide grassroots consultations, popularly known as Town Hall Meetings. This “bottom up” approach to planning informed our development priorities.

**Honourable Speaker,
Fellow Namibians,**

At the end of the first term, the Harambee Prosperity Plan recorded an average 70 percent overall execution rate on set goals and outcomes. This has been calculated against the implementation outcomes of activities per pillar. Despite a number of independent intervening variables that adversely affected our ability to obtain the set target of an 80 percent execution rate, we achieved this relatively high rate by focusing on key deliverables with lesser financial implications.

Effective Governance, the first pillar of the HPP requires the least financial resourcing and is more heavily dependent on the cultivation of an efficient and effective performance culture in the Public Service.

We have made a good start implementing our National Anti-Corruption Strategy. All forms of corruption are destructive and regrettably continue to taint our country. Contrary to erroneous perceptions, we do not lack the political will to fight corruption. We have taken action and will, going forward, continue to take decisive action to tackle this scourge.

You may recall that long before the so-called Fishrot expose, during February 2018, I requested several Cabinet Ministers to respond to allegations of corruption leveled against them. Their responses were subsequently forwarded to the Anti-Corruption Commission for investigation, consistent with my conviction to strengthen processes, systems and institutions. Today, two senior former Ministers are in jail for 7 months, with no interference from the Executive. This confirms my firm belief in the principle of the Separation of Powers and allowing the law to take its course.

I often state that 'truth does not change'. Concrete actions have been taken over the term to confront cases of perceived and alleged corruption. These include:

- The decision to cancel awarding of the Hosea Kutako International Airport upgrading tender, which was inflated from 3 to 7 billion Namibian Dollars. This was challenged in the High Court. We initially lost that case and appealed to the Supreme Court, which subsequently overturned the decision.**
- We launched Investigations into alleged irregularities in the contracts for the National Oil Storage Facility and Neckartal Dam, which exposed Government to currency fluctuations. The investigations resulted in a Disciplinary Hearing, resulting in some implicated officials being cleared, while others received appropriate sanctions due to administrative shortcomings.**
- Government, through the Ministry of Finance also launched lifestyle audits and investigations into tax evasion and money laundering. Charges brought against individuals ended up before the Courts.**
- Ongoing cases of alleged corruption such as the SME Bank, Offshore Development Company and the Development Capital Portfolio of the GIPF and the KORA Music Awards are all at the Courts.**

We will only prevail in the war against corruption, when transparency is nurtured within governance systems. Each and every Namibian has a role to play in uprooting corruption. I caution that we should protect the dignity of fellow citizens by guarding against accusations of corruption in the absence of evidence. In the fight against corruption, the due process of law must prevail.

A testament to our commitment to improving Accountability and Transparency, Namibia increased in ranking on the Ibrahim Index, making us one of the top five best-governed countries in Africa. Namibia is 4th on the continent preceded by Mauritius, Seychelles and Cabo Verde in the top three positions, and followed by Botswana, Ghana, Rwanda and South Africa, respectively. This progression can be attributed to the introduction of a Public Performance Management System, legislative reforms to strengthen accountability and transparency and aforementioned investigations launched into public tender irregularities. The Whistle Blower and Witness Protection Acts will be operationalized during this term, as additional measures to strengthen the fight against corruption.

Similarly, key reforms including the voluntary declaration of assets by my wife and I, Members of Parliament and Senior Government Officials, and the Open-Door Media policy of the Presidency, have strengthened transparency.

The Reporter's Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index of 2020, ranked Namibia Number 1 in Africa and 23rd in the world, outranking long established democracies in other parts of the world. Going forward, this Government will continue to champion Media Freedom.

However, as we undertake much needed introspection as Government, we also expect that the media reflect on its role in the society. We rely on the media,

as the Fourth Estate, for truth and fairness. The role of the media in providing factual reporting is therefore of paramount importance.

**Honourable Speaker,
Fellow Namibians,**

The Namibian economy continues to experience unprecedented headwinds, since 2016. Among the challenges included are declining economic growth and per capita income, low investments and a high public expenditure ratio, compounded by the global economic downturn, declining commodity prices and exchange rate fluctuations. The five-year drought that ravaged our agricultural sector, exposed thousands of Namibian households to food insecurity, necessitating the reallocation of funding to the Drought Relief Programme, in line with our commitment that no Namibian should die due to Hunger.

To stabilize our public finances, a fiscal consolidation strategy and expenditure prioritization was introduced in 2015. To contain expenditure Government effected the deepest cuts since independence. I would like to thank the former Minister of Finance, Comrade Calle Schlettwein for implementing these difficult reforms to stabilize the fiscal position. Green shoots of recovery were becoming visible. Unfortunately these prospects have been severely compromised by the outbreak of COVID-19. Comrade Calle, I am confident you will discharge your new mandate with the same vigour, to ensure food and water supply security, which are both very critical.

As promised in my 2019 SONA, I announced in March this year a reduced Government structure from 25 Ministries down to 19 Ministries. We achieved this reduction of six Ministries by merging some of the existing ones, to align government functions for efficient and effective service delivery.

In line with the SWAPO Party's commitment to reaching gender parity at the highest levels of government leadership, 18 of the 29 newly appointed Ministers and Deputy Ministers are women. This represents 62 percent female representation in the Executive. We recognize that our fight against inequality would not be complete without the empowerment of women. I am confident this House is working towards similar milestones.

In light of ongoing Government measures to reduce public expenditure, reforms were undertaken to eliminate wastage, with respect to the conditions of service and benefits for Public Office Bearers. As a result, there will be no new vehicle fleet of Government for the term and no new off-road vehicles will be purchased for members of the Executive and Public Office Bearers. This will translate into a saving of approximately 200 million Namibian Dollars. Furthermore, we have abolished the positions of Special Advisors to Governors.

At this juncture, I would like to thank the new Minister of Finance, Comrade Ipumbi Shiimi, for tabling under the circumstances, a reasonable budget. Given his detailed budget speech, I will not repeat the financial aspects in this SONA.

**Honourable Speaker,
Members of Parliament,**

On Tuesday this week, I held a telephonic conversation with the Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, during which I raised, among other matters, the difficult situation that so-called "Upper Middle-Income Countries" like Namibia find themselves in. We have maintained that while the concept of upper middle-income countries is valid, the application, which takes our GDP and divides it by our small population, thus deriving a high per capita income, is a flawed formula that requires urgent reconsideration.

This “upper middle income” classification continues to disadvantage Namibia’s ability to access soft loans, while countries regarded as less developed are eligible to receive grant funding. I am of the view that measures such as the UNDP Human Development Index provides a more accurate assessment of development per capita.

Such a contextual criteria based reclassification will help developing countries like Namibia to effectively redress historical structural imbalances. We believe that poverty should not be managed, but must be eradicated, through effective tools such as economic empowerment and employment creation. According to the Namibia Statistics Agency, unemployment remains high at 33 percent in 2018, while youth unemployment increased to 46.1 percent during the same period. The status quo is not sustainable and emphasis falls on stimulating job-generating economic growth. The NSA also reports that the Namibian economy created 48,857 jobs between 2016 and 2018. Regrettably, recurring drought spells and declining consumer spending negatively reversed these gains.

Investment promotion has been central to this Government’s economic development agenda. There was a tapering off in investments from 2016, following completion of major capital projects in the mining and construction sectors. To mitigate declining investments, Government aggressively pursued regional and international investment roadshows. The 2016 International Invest in Namibia Conference secured 34 investment projects with a total value of 2.65 billion Namibian Dollars. The 2019 Economic Growth Summit, convened under the auspices of the High Level Panel on the Namibian Economy, mobilized 14 billion Namibian Dollars in investment and financial commitments.

Delays in decision-making continue to undermine our ability to concretize investment deals and secure development. I have on different occasions;

urged Cabinet Ministers to timely provide responses to prospective investors. We cannot continue to keep people waiting indefinitely. Whether 'Yes' or 'No' we must provide responses. I am mindful that with increasing perceptions of corruption, Ministers and officials may be apprehensive to take decisions. However, the new Cabinet is enjoined to timeously provide responses.

SME development recorded satisfactory improvements over the term. Following the closure of the SME Bank, Government through the Development Bank of Namibia established SME Centers in three regions, to respond to SME funding needs. The Development Bank of Namibia approved a total of 425 million Namibian Dollars for SME projects between 2017 and 2020, benefitting 318 SMEs. To address the hurdle of non-collateralized lending, Government introduced the Skills Based Lending facility; the Credit Guarantee Scheme; Mentorship Programmes and facilitated the establishment of one hundred and twenty one rural youth enterprises. All these programmes were capitalized with an amount of 130 million Namibian Dollars.

Progress has been made through the Industrial Policy. Our economic transformation agenda remains urgent and can be realized through structural reforms that support inclusion of the previously disadvantaged majority, and diversification of economic activities through industrialization and manufacturing. For this reason, once the Namibia Equitable Economic Empowerment Bill is tabled, I implore this Honourable House to prioritize its enactment.

Government received this week a Report from the Economic Policy Research Association on the latest version of NEEEB. A cursory review suggests that the authors are interested only in protecting the interests of well-established businesses and a select few. Typically what is referred to as placing 'Profit before People'. It is regrettable that some Namibians are not willing to hold hands, to preserve the future of our country. As I have often cautioned through

renowned economist Prof. Joseph Stieglitz, who ascribes to the Georgist philosophy advocating for equal rights for all and special privileges for none, "Prosperity that is not shared, will not be sustainable. The only sustainable growth will be shared growth."

**Honourable Speaker,
Fellow Namibians,**

Namibia remains among the most unequal societies in the world, confirming the deeply embedded structural nature of our challenge. The status quo is not sustainable and we will have to intensify people-centered reforms that result in tangible improvements in the lives of our people.

We have made progress and poverty has declined. According to Namibia Statistics Agency, poverty declined in Namibia from a 70 percent in 1994, to 37.7 percent in 2003 and 18 percent by 2016. According to the 2017 World Bank Report and as endorsed by Oxfam International, Namibia's decline in poverty is attributable to a targeted policy framework. Government allocates a high percentage of resources to the social sectors, including universal access to education, a highly subsidized healthcare system and Social Safety Nets that reverse the effects of a skewed economy. Namibia, South Africa and Botswana are among the few African countries that provide the Old Age Social Grant as a cash transfer, which directly contribute to arresting poverty and childhood stunting. Government has increased this grant by more than 100 percent over the past four years.

Other Social Safety Nets implemented by Government include the Foster Care Grant for vulnerable and orphaned children; Marginalized and Disability Grants; the School Feeding Programme; Food for Work and the Veterans' grants. In total, Government spends 3.9 billion Namibian Dollars on social

grants per annum, benefiting 1 million people or 41 percent of the total population.

Over the period 2015 to 2019, Government redirected resources to the value of 2.1 billion Namibian Dollars towards the drought relief programme, which has benefitted annually, an average of 564,983 people across all 14 regions. During the same period Government introduced the Food Bank to reduce hunger among the extreme poor citizens in urban and peri-urban areas.

The Food Bank has been rolled out to all 14 regions and covers 10,156 households or 42,081 individual beneficiaries and 219 Street Committees. Due to ongoing refinements to the eligibility criteria of beneficiaries, the figure has decreased, and the programme is now serving truly needy members of our society.

Despite the inroads we have made, there are limits to what fiscal policy alone can achieve in eradicating poverty and inequality in Namibia. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have the potential to reverse some of the gains made in our war against poverty.

Looking ahead, Government will work actively to consolidate Social Safety Nets by automating processes to remove duplications and reduce transaction costs. We will also investigate the feasibility of gradually phasing out the Food Bank to introduce a modified Basic Income Grant.

We have made tangible gains in the number of enrollments at Vocational Education and Training Centers from 16,000 in 2015 to 35,000 student intakes in 2020, exceeding the HPP target of 25,000 new enrollments. Additional building and upgrading of VTCs in different parts of the country commenced

during the period under review and this process will be completed in the next three years.

Housing remains a challenge. However the delivery of serviced land, housing and sanitation has progressed in line with targets set over the term. The HPP target to deliver 20,000 new houses was achieved at 82 percent, with delivery of 16,464 houses by March 2020. These houses were constructed in collaboration with various stakeholders including Namibia Housing Enterprise; GIPF; Shack Dwellers Federation; Build Together and a number of Public Private Partnerships.

The delivery of residential erven was achieved at 89 percent or 23,194 plots of the targeted 26,000. The national housing backlog remains above 300,000 units. I am conscious that despite these achievements and considering the persistently high national demand, we need to accelerate our efforts in the area of housing and land provision, particularly in major cities and towns. While the bucket toilet system was not entirely eliminated by the end of the period envisaged, we achieved an elimination rate of 74 percent.

Since the declaration of a Humanitarian Crisis in informal settlements, a pilot project has commenced in Windhoek, to transform peri-urban settlements into sustainable human settlements that are planned, serviced and occupied through various tenure options. Urban land reform is both a moral and political imperative. Our efforts to restore dignified life will be incomplete without the delivery of decent shelter and sanitation. Rural economic development, through delegation of key central Government functions and decentralization of industries, must be implemented in tandem, as a means of addressing the factors driving rural-urban migration.

In this regard, I welcome the announcement by NamPower to electrify informal settlements in Windhoek. This is a positive start. I also commend

Private Sector institutions that joined hands with communities to deliver housing through initiatives such as the 'Buy A Brick' campaign. This is the Spirit of Harambee.

Claims to ancestral land rights were extensively debated at the 2nd National Land Conference. No consensus could be reached given the complexity of the issues. I therefore appointed a Commission of Inquiry into claims of ancestral land rights and restitution by affected communities. The Commission led by Judge Shafimana Ueitele submitted its preliminary report in December 2019. The final report is due at the end of June 2020.

In 2015, Government entered into bilateral negotiations on the genocide with the Federal Republic of Germany. A Special Envoy, Amb. Ngavirue, under the supervision of a Special Cabinet Political Committee chaired by the Vice President, was appointed. Good progress has been made. The Federal Republic of Germany has agreed that the events of 1904-1908 can be termed genocide and they are ready to render an apology, at the highest level of German Government. What remains outstanding is the final agreement on the content and level of reconciliation and reconstruction programme. I always emphasize that you do not make peace with a friend. You forgive and make peace with an enemy - even if you cannot forget what they did to you.

Namibia is on the verge of achieving total HIV/AIDS epidemic control. In line with the triple 90 goals, our HIV response stands at 94:96:95. This means 94 percent of people who are HIV positive know their status; 96 percent are on ARV treatment, and 95 percent are virally suppressed. As a result of this success, the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission yielded encouraging outcomes, whereby 97 percent of babies born to HIV-positive mothers are HIV-free. The cooperation agreement between Namibia and the Government of the United States through PEPFAR continues to materially support our

HIV/AIDS management programmes, which has enabled us to achieve these gains.

Following the outbreak of Hepatitis E in 2017, we have mobilized a national response in 10 regions, providing safe water, sanitation and hygiene, where cases have been reported mostly from informal settlements. A total of 7,703 Hepatitis E cases and 65 deaths have been reported to date.

While Namibia has done relatively well in its response to eliminate Malaria, the country is beginning to record some reversals, with an upswing in new cases following the last transmission season of September 2019 to April 2020. The increase is due to the good rainfalls and insufficient Indoor Residual Spraying coverage.

As we mobilize resources into the immediate public health emergency of COVID-19, I caution stakeholders not to redirect all efforts and funding at the expense of other public healthcare response. Maintaining a balance will be critical to preserving the gains made.

Honourable Speaker,

Fellow Namibians,

Modern and reliable infrastructure is critical for high and sustained economic growth. The following infrastructure projects were completed over the term:

-
- The deepening and expansion of the Port of Walvis Bay, positioning our country as a strategic logistics hub and gateway into the region.**
 - The construction of Neckartal Dam was completed and inaugurated in March 2020. Current water levels in the dam stand at 86 million cubic meters following the good rains. At full capacity this dam will become the largest water storage facility in the country.**
-

- According to MTC, its telecommunications network has been upgraded from 2G to 3G. To date 83 percent of our population has access to 3G broadband services, while 34 percent have access to 4G services. A notable achievement considering the vastness of our country. I am proud of MTC which we inaugurated in 1994 with the Prime Minister of Sweden. Therefore it is disappointing that network connectivity reliability is diminishing of late.
 - The remaining roads at advanced stage include the following dual carriageways: Windhoek-Okahandja; Swakopmund-Walvis Bay and the Windhoek-Hosea Kutako International Airport, all due for completion during the second term.
-

Significant progress has been made to increase the national road network and upgrade roads from gravel to bitumen standard. Over the term, an additional 819 kilometers of bitumen standard road and 373 kilometers of gravel roads were added to the national road network of more than 44,500 kilometers. According to the World Economic Forum - Global Competitiveness Report of 2019, Namibia remains number 1 in Africa for road infrastructure.

Securing electricity and water supply for both industry and household consumption was a material concern at the onset of the First Term. As a result of policy reforms in the energy sector, articulated in the National Integrated Resource Plan; National Energy Policy and National Independent Power Producer policy, the country experienced zero load shedding over the term. We increased the electricity generating capacity from 400 Mega Watts to 624 MW. National demand increased to 713 MW and imports of 319 MW are drawn annually through the Southern Africa Power Pool to bridge the deficit.

Water supply security came under pressure due to the prolonged drought. Government took decisive action to constitute a Cabinet Committee on Water Supply Security that worked to guarantee water supply for the central and coastal regions even in a no-rain scenario. I express my appreciation to the members of this Committee chaired by Mr. Pedro Maritz and the former Ministers, Comrades Mutorwa and !Naruseb, who ensured taps did not run dry during this critical time.

Government intensified drilling of boreholes and upgrading water infrastructure across the country, to enhance access to potable water for rural communities that were faced with water shortages as a result of the drought. Currently 94 percent of the population has access to potable water.

**Honourable Speaker,
Fellow Namibians,**

Crossing over to International Relations, the world is undergoing major transformations and our Foreign Policy must be adequately geared to dealing with these new challenges. The multilateral order is the best guarantor for world peace. The Namibian government remains committed to strengthening the multilateral system, through support for international accords and problem solving. During the period under review, we endeavoured to strengthen mutually beneficial relations with friendly nations at the regional, continental and international level, through State Visits, Working Visits, Joint Commissions of Cooperation and Political and Diplomatic Consultations. Engagements with dignitaries from Africa and the world demonstrate our commitment to bilateral cooperation to advance global peace and our domestic economic interests.

The year 2019 witnessed Namibia handover the SADC Chairmanship to Tanzania at the 39th SADC Summit held in Dar Es Salaam on August 17, 2019. During Namibia's tenure, we continued to witness significant progress in the entrenchment of democratic values and constitutionality in our region. The Kingdom of Eswatini, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Republic of Madagascar, the Union of Comoros, the Republic of Malawi and the Republic of South Africa held successful elections during Namibia's chairmanship. For the first time since her independence, we witnessed a peaceful transfer of power in the DRC, marking what we all hope will be a new era of prosperity, peace and political stability for the country.

The presidential election in Malawi was challenged in the court after which results were annulled. The date of June 23, 2020, has been set for fresh elections, proving once more that SADC is committed towards the establishment of robust processes, systems and institutions.

We also witnessed the signing of the Peace Accord in the Republic of Mozambique, a further demonstration of SADC's commitment to peace, unity and stability as precursors for regional integration and development.

There were challenges, as the region faced several weather related phenomena. We witnessed extensive flooding in Comoros, Mozambique, Tanzania, Madagascar, Malawi, Zimbabwe and heavy rains in Kwazulu Natal, South Africa. Under Namibia's leadership, SADC Member States reacted swiftly, displaying regional solidarity to provide humanitarian assistance to affected countries.

The world is currently facing a Triple Crisis. That of a health crisis, a climate change induced drought-crisis and a consequential economic crisis. Fittingly, the United Nations has termed COVID-19 as the "worst crisis" humanity has

faced since World War II. As more nations seek to secure domestic security through inward-looking actions, international cooperation should be re-emphasized as our best option to mitigate transnational threats. We should work through existing bodies such as SACU, SADC, the AU and the UN to form regional, continental and international coalitions that support the recovery of our countries, in the aftermath of this crisis. Now more than ever, there is need for African countries to harmonize measures that strengthen our economies and create jobs. These efforts will require unity, commitment and sacrifice.

I have been in contact with world and regional leaders to discuss a coordinated response to COVID-19 in support of the evacuation of foreign nationals from Namibia, and to facilitate the repatriation of our citizens and residents from abroad. I express Namibia's sincere appreciation to all the nations that have supported us to this end.

As we plan ahead towards economic recovery, we should be cognizant that economic diplomacy will be an ever-important tool in the mobilization of international assistance and financing to foster recovery and growth. That brings me to the end of the First Term of Office report. As indicated earlier the full report is available for your perusal.

**Honourable Speaker,
Fellow Namibians,**

NATIONAL POLICY RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC

I will now proceed to outline the national policy response to COVID-19. With confirmation of the first two cases of COVID-19 in the country on March 14, 2020, I declared a State of Emergency on March 17, 2020 and directed an

immediate lockdown that lasted for 38 days. We also took the decision to cancel the 30th Independence Day public celebration, reducing the event to a smaller inauguration ceremony at the State House.

The severe restrictions were warranted as pre-emptive measures to slow the spread of disease and earn government time to strengthen the public health sector's capacity to adequately respond. Our multi-stakeholder efforts have not gone unnoticed and have garnered commendation by the World Health Organisation and admiration in the international media.

Infections flattened at 16 cases with no new cases reported for 45 days, until an uptick in new infections began from 20 May 2020. The status of COVID-19 in the country today is as follows:

-
- **25 - Confirmed Cases**
 - **16 - Recoveries**
 - **09 - Active Cases**
 - **A total number of 4, 108 persons have been tested.**
-

Fortunately there has been no COVID-19 related death in the country to date and we are managing the virus in Namibia, to this end.

Namibia adopted 4 stages with corresponding measures to gradually ease lockdown restrictions. The country has just migrated to STAGE 3 under Moderate Precautions. The final phase, which is STAGE 4, is estimated to come into effect on June 30. This will introduce a New Normal that could last to the end of the State of Emergency or beyond.

The imminent reopening of border points for public travel presents a key vulnerability. While life and business will have to return to some semblance of

normality, this is a process we intend to manage carefully. We have commenced work in preparation, on the precautionary measures and adjustments that will allow for the gradual re-opening of borders, for public travel. For now we are open for the transportation of goods.

I thank the Ministers of Health and Information and their Deputies, who are keeping the nation informed through the COVID-19 Information Center. We made history with the appointment of the youngest Deputy Minister on the continent. The appointment of a Deputy Minister from an opposition Party was also well received. The two have been running the Information Center effectively. This is a sign of the Namibian House we are building, where the youth and the opposition work together, as One Namibia, One Nation. I thank the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister and the entire Government for pulling together during this time of crisis.

An effective war is waged on multiple fronts. I would like to use this opportunity to acknowledge the hand of God over our country and to thank all Namibians and spiritual leaders who answered the call at the onset of the outbreak, to pray for the preservation of our Nation. As leaders, we will continue doing all that we can to protect Namibian lives.

Notwithstanding our successes to date, we must remain vigilant and maintain acceptable social behaviour. Our people residing in informal settlements are hard-pressed to abide by the regulations and are less able to insulate themselves against the economic effects of the lockdown measures. Despite these challenges, every Namibian has a personal responsibility to complement Government efforts, by adhering to the regulations. If social and physical distancing protocols are relaxed too soon, we risk secondary 'waves' of infection.

The big and small acts of kindness and benevolence shown by different members of our society during this time have heartened us all. The act of charity is not only a commendable human trait, it is also a cornerstone of united, peaceful and prosperous nations. I thank all Namibians for the unity and solidarity, particularly the frontline health workers and law enforcement agencies.

**Honourable Speaker,
Fellow Namibians,**

Despite its effectiveness, the extreme social distancing measure of a lockdown comes at a great cost to the economy. Under the initial STAGE 1 lockdown domestic production was halved and jobs have been affected.

While the virus may be deadly, we note that poverty also kills. The social evils of crime, substance abuse, gender-based violence, poor mental health, depression and suicide are aggravated by poor standards of living and a sense of despair. This understanding has informed Government's response, which weighed the risks against benefits and drew a balance between protecting the lives and livelihoods of Namibians. These have not been easy decisions to take, however I am convinced the cost of not acting would have been far greater.

As a short term measure to mitigate the negative socio-economic impacts, Government formulated an Economic Relief and Stimulus Package amounting to N\$8.1 billion Namibian Dollars. This has provided relief to formal and informal businesses in some of the worst affected sectors such as Tourism and Hospitality, Fishing, Construction, SMEs and the informal sector.

The package provides a plethora of responses, ranging from reductions in interest rates, to cash transfers, labour subsidies and negotiated debt

repayment holidays, and credit support to business, workers and households. Through the National Employment and Salary Protection Scheme and Emergency Income Grant, we are disbursing grants to employers, workers and citizens who lost income or means of livelihood.

The social indicators have been a source of encouragement. The number of medical trauma cases at hospital Casualties declined drastically, while the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund reported no accidents on our national roads during the Easter weekend, due to the restriction on public travel. Although the number of Gender Based Violence cases reported at police stations show a decline during the lockdown, we are aware that the number of telephonic complaints received by Lifeline increased under the lockdown. As Namibians we have found common ground against this common enemy.

**Honourable Speaker,
Fellow Namibians,**

UNLOCKING THE FUTURE: ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN

The economic crisis spurred by COVID-19 presents us all the opportunity to reflect and redesign our future. We will use the lessons from the current challenges and reframe them into opportunities for recovery and growth. Together with the Cabinet, I am in the process of finalizing the Harambee Prosperity Plan II, which will provide a roadmap for accelerated implementation of Government programmes that are geared towards economic recovery in the second term.

The Plan will be informed by prioritised commitments from the 2019 SWAPO Party Manifesto; existing funded Capital projects and recommendations from

the High Level Panel on the Namibian Economy. The Economic Recovery Plan at a high level will focus to achieve the following:

-
- **Regaining fiscal stability;**
 - **Structural economic reforms;**
 - **Public sector reforms;**
 - **Improving productivity.**
-

Central to these reforms is a need to craft a pragmatic economic growth plan that will identify new economic growth opportunities. I announced in March 2020 the establishment of the Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board in the Presidency, to fast track Investment Promotion and SME Development, by facilitating a conducive business environment, investment promotion and sustainable SME development. I will announce the head of this entity in due course.

While economic crises are cyclical and recurring, Nations succeed on the basis of work ethic, rate of execution and ability to do more with fewer resources. We must transform the performance and service culture, as well as the level of productivity within public and private sector institutions to competitively reposition our economy. We must actively seek opportunities for growth, innovation and transformation. More importantly, we must demonstrate strong commitment to implementing reforms.

Global supply shortages in essential medical supplies, presented an opportunity to our country. Supported by Academia and the Namibia Standards Institute, we have, in a matter of weeks, converted the productive capacities of SME's to produce sanitizer, certified surgical and non-surgical facemasks. Such renewed domestic investments should remain viable beyond this particular crisis.

IN CLOSING

In times of crisis, true character is revealed. We are at a crossroads in our history and in this year of introspection, at this hour of need, we are faced with the most burning question of our time. Thirty years after our independence, how do we shape the future of our nation? Our collective decisions and actions over the following months will not only determine whether we emerge stronger from this unprecedented storm, but will define the Namibian journey. A journey conceived in the minds of a colonised people, from whom selfless patriots emerged and in the face of unrelenting aggression, chose to fight for the ultimate gifts of life, health, peace, dignity and freedom.

I am convinced that the Namibian spirit, unrelenting in the face of adversity, unflinching in the eye of the storm, will once again prevail as we unite, to overcome the challenges ahead of us. We cannot retreat in this battle, we cannot disown this fight; neither can we reject the spirit of unity that has prevailed amongst the sons and daughters of this country. This is the spirit that defines our national identity. It augments the character of our people. It crystalizes the narrative of our Namibian House.

I am certain that if we work in unison, putting the best of our minds to work, we, like those who fought for the freedom of this nation will be able to deliver our people in this second phase of the struggle for economic emancipation. Let us not shy away from the task at hand. Let us seize the opportunity to cement this nation's legacy, as a people who overcame adversity, a people who persevered in the face of difficulty and a people whose fortitude and patriotism delivered freedom, unity, peace and shared prosperity.

Long Live the Republic of Namibia.

Thank You.
