

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY
HIS EXCELLENCY DR HAGE G. GEINGOB,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 3rd SESSION OF THE 7TH
PARLIAMENT**

FEBRUARY 9, 2021

WINDHOEK (Virtual)

Check against delivery

- **Speaker of the National Assembly, Honourable Professor Peter Katjavivi;**
- **Chairperson of the National Council, Honourable Lukas Sinimbo Muha;**
- **Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia and Leader of Government Business in the House, Right Honourable Saara Kuugongelwa–Amadhila;**
- **Leader of the official opposition, Honourable McHenry Venaani;**
- **Honourable Members of Parliament;**
- **Vice President of the Republic of Namibia, Comrade Nangolo Mbumba;**
- **Your Lordship Peter Shivute, Chief Justice;**
- **Your Lordship Petrus Damaseb, Deputy Chief Justice, Hon. Judges and other Members of the Judiciary;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

As is customary during this time of the year, the President officiates at the opening of the three Organs of State, namely the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary.

Last week, I opened the first session of Cabinet, today I am honoured to officially open the 3rd Session of the 7th Parliament, and tomorrow, I will open the Judicial Year for 2021. These events should not be seen as mere formalities but should be appreciated for what they symbolize – A robust, stable and effective Governance Architecture.

Honourable Speaker,

It is apt that this year, the Opening of the 3rd session of the 7th Parliament coincides with the celebration of our Constitution Day. In commemorating this historic day, I recall the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly, which took place on November 21, 1989 at Tintenpalast, which is now our Parliament.

At this momentous occasion, I stated the following:

"The people of Namibia ... have given us a mandate to hammer out and adopt in a spirit of compromise, a spirit of give and take, a constitution that will launch our country and people into nationhood. This is a trust we dare not betray..."

At the same occasion, the Founding Father of Namibia, Comrade Sam Nujoma said the following:

Namibia is a huge country with a small population. Therefore, all Namibians, regardless of colour, creed or place of origin, have a place in our beautiful country. It is for us only to reach out to one another and mould a new nation out of diversity.

With this in mind, today, we not only celebrate the existence of a supreme law in our country, but we celebrate our nationhood. We celebrate the fact that this sacred document was born from a spirit of compromise and unity. We celebrate that we live in a beautiful country; a country in which all Namibians, regardless of colour creed or place of origin, can live peacefully. This is what defines our nation. Our constitution is our voice, it speaks to who

we are and therefore we must continue to uphold it, so as not to betray the trust of our people.

Honourable Speaker,

Democracy in the Republic of Namibia is at its height, as indicated by the dynamic and peaceful contestation witnessed during the 2019 Presidential and National Assembly Elections and the subsequent 2020 Regional Council and Local Authority Elections.

The fact that Namibians from all walks of life enjoyed the freedom to choose their preferred political parties and candidates, without fear of intimidation or reprisals, speaks to the fact that Namibia remains a country supported by the pillars of democracy, unity, peace, stability and the rule of law.

Of course, with a stable democracy comes an even greater expectation from the sovereigns, who, while enjoying the security guaranteed by unity, peace and stability, turn their attention towards economic opportunity and prosperity.

That is why over the past several years, the patriotic euphoria and excitement of democratic contestation have produced higher levels of expectations from our bosses, the sovereigns. For this reason, when I opened Cabinet last week, I remarked that this year will be a pivotal year, which will define the future of our democracy.

Within this current global climate of turmoil and flux, there is even more demand and scrutiny placed on our leadership. It is for this reason that we, as leaders and lawmakers, must use the opportunities at our disposal to make a positive impact in the lives of the citizens of this country.

Honourable Speaker,

I have christened this year as the Year of Resilience. Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity. It is the psychological quality that allows a person or persons to be knocked down by the adversities of life but to get back up and come back stronger than before.

As we are all aware, the Year 2020 will go down in history as the year in which the COVID-19 virus turned the world on its head. The very fact that I am delivering this address in a virtual setting, reminds us of the manner in which the coronavirus has impacted the way we live, work and play. No aspect of human life has been left unaffected by this invisible enemy.

To date, we are still reeling from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a Government, we have had to make extraordinary sacrifices in order to mitigate the effects of this virus. Lockdowns and curfews have been put in place, schools and businesses have been closed, and revenue-generating activities have been curtailed. All of these factors have impacted our economy and most notably, the Namibian people, many of whom have lost their businesses, jobs and ultimately, their livelihoods. We have diverted a significant percentage of funds towards

providing economic relief through the N\$ 8 billion stimulus package which included N\$1 billion health response and a N\$500 million SME financing intervention. Despite these timely interventions, we are aware that the task ahead remains fraught with difficulties.

It is due to this reality that we have to display resilience in overcoming the daunting task that faces us; that of reviving our economic fortunes and steering Namibia back towards the path of prosperity. Resilience will mean, rising above the challenges of COVID-19 in order to deliver on the mandate bestowed to us by the people of Namibia. COVID-19 cannot be an excuse for non-delivery of service. Yes, it will impact the manner and sometimes the rate of execution but ultimately the onus is on us to find novel and innovative ways to achieve our goals, without delay.

Honourable Speaker,

While speaking of innovative ways of achieving our goals, I am pleased to note that one positive aspect to have emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic is the adoption of information technology that has rapidly entrenched itself in our workplace.

We are living in the information age and the discourse concerning the future of work is dominated by references to the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). Thus, to learn that our Members of Parliament will, in the near future, have ability to remotely log-in to partake in Parliament sessions is a positive sign that the infusion of technological systems into the workplace is taking place at the highest level.

Hopefully, technology will enhance the work of Parliament. As lawmakers, you are representatives of the people and therefore you are held to very high standards. In this regard, it is crucial that your conduct within and outside of the chamber must connote honesty and integrity. I say this to you with cognizance that this applies to representatives of all the organs of the state, including the executive, which I represent.

In no way should the conduct of elected officials betray the public trust therefore it is imperative that you should aspire to set high standards of conduct by displaying exemplary behavior, as well as setting goals which the people of this nation, especially the younger generation can aspire to. Lively and intelligent debates are welcome, as these are signs of our vibrant and thriving democracy. Furthermore, it is encouraging to see the impact that our youthful Members of Parliament have had in terms of contributing to discourse and debate within the chamber. Nevertheless, let us learn to agree to disagree while maintaining utmost decorum of this noble house.

Honourable Speaker,

Part of my duty in opening parliament involves referring to the legislative programme for the coming session. I am therefore pleased to note that the following Bills are up for tabling during the Course of the year. These are:

1.Combating of Rape Amendment Bill

2.Combating of Domestic Violence Amendment Bill

- 3.Criminal Procedure Amendment Bill**
- 4.High Court Amendment Bill**
- 5.Magistrates Court amendment Bill**
- 6.Divorce Bill**
- 7.Ombudsman Bill**
- 8.Child Justice Bill**
- 9.Marriage Bill**
- 10.Uniform Marriages Bill**
- 11.Banking Institutions Amendment Bill**
- 12.Metrology Bill**

As part of our construction plan for the Namibian House, we want to build a nation where our citizens, irrespective of their age, race and gender, feel loved, secure and happy in their homes and communities. It is therefore of utmost importance that the integrity of our House is guaranteed by laws that deter and prevent behaviours and conditions that place the lives of the most vulnerable members of our community under threat.

In this regard, I wish to touch on the subject of Gender Based Violence. Honourable Speaker, a nation that cannot guarantee the safety of its women and children is a nation, which can never ascend to the lofty heights of prosperity. Crimes that are aimed at women and children, often in the most brutal fashion, have become persistent in our society, with devastating consequences. This cannot be tolerated.

I therefore implore you, as lawmakers, to ensure that we create a legal environment, which exacts maximum punishment on the perpetrators of these deplorable crimes so that we can rid our society of this scourge.

In this aspect, I am pleased to note that the Combating of Rape Amendment Bill and the Combating of Domestic Violence Amendment Bill, include appropriate penalties that not only demonstrate that Government takes the offence of rape seriously but also our resolve to deter offenders from committing these heinous crimes.

The people of Namibia have mandated the government with the responsibility of delivering on the promise of prosperity. This will not come easy but come what may, we must deliver. It will require resilience for us to emerge from the pandemic and concentrate our efforts on economic recovery.

Let us therefore focus our efforts to the task of giving our nation and people the sense of direction and purpose to move forward. Let us set an example in this Parliament of a united and dedicated people with a will and determination to solve their problems and aspire towards greater achievements. Let us aspire to encapsulate the thought of one of the Founding Fathers of African Independence, Dr. Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah who said, "It is clear that we must find an African solution to our problems, and that this can only be found in African unity. Divided we are weak; united, Africa could become one of the greatest forces for good in the world."

In conclusion, let me paraphrase this great man by saying, it is clear that we must find a Namibian solution to our problems, and that this can only be found in national unity. Divided we are weak; united, Namibia could become one of the greatest forces for good in Africa and the World.

Let us make this a reality by working in unison and by working tirelessly to build a future worthy of the greatest dreams and aspirations of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice in the name of our independence.

With these words, it is now my honour to declare the 3rd Session of the 7th Parliament officially open. May God bless you all and may God bless the Republic of Namibia.

I thank you.