

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



STATEMENT

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR HAGE G. GEINGOB,

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 5th SESSION OF THE 6TH PARLIAMENT

FEBRUARY 14, 2017

WINDHOEK

Check against delivery

- **Speaker of the National Assembly, Honourable Professor Peter Katjavivi;**
- **Chairperson of the National Council, Honourable Margaret Mensah – Williams;**

- **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**

Let me now acknowledge our special invited guests.

- **Vice President of the Republic of Namibia, Comrade Nickey Iyambo;**
- **Comrade Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma, First President of the Republic and the Founding Father of the Namibian Nation;**
- **Comrade Hifikepunye Pohamba, Second President of the Republic of Namibia;**
- **Madam Monica Geingos, First Lady of the Republic of Namibia;**
- **Your Lordship Peter Shivute, Chief Justice;**
- **Your Lordship Petrus Damaseb, Deputy Chief Justice, Hon. Judges and other Members of the Judiciary;**
- **Hon. Laura McLeod-Katjirua, Governor of the Khomas Region;**
- **Comrade Theo-Ben Gurirab, Former Speaker of the National Assembly and Mrs. Guriras;**
- **Hon. Asser Kapere, Former Chairperson of the National Council and Mrs. Kapere;**
- **Mr. Junias Kandjeke, Auditor-General;**
- **Your Worship Mr. Muesee Kazapua, Mayor of the City of Windhoek;**
- **Mr. Ipumbu Shiimi, Governor of the Bank of Namibia;**
- **Madam Katjavivi;**
- **Mr. Williams;**
- **Distinguished Service Chiefs;**
- **Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps;**
- **Members of the media;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

What is dedication? Simply put, dedication is the act of being wholly committed to a particular thought or course of action. It is a feeling of very strong support for or loyalty to someone or something. 2017 is the year of rededication. It is the year in which we recommit ourselves to our national objectives and reaffirm our loyalty to our country.

Today's Opening of Parliament takes place at a time where we are called on, to re-dedicate ourselves to the ethos and principles which guided us during the darkest hours of our struggle, which guided us during the uncertainty and excitement of our first ever elections, and after that election, have guided us for 27 years, through good times and bad times.

4 days ago today, 27 years ago, we adopted the Namibian Constitution, and in so doing, ushered in an era, in which the rights of each and every Namibian are guaranteed. We ushered in an era of reconciliation and forgiveness. We ushered in an era of peace, unity and justice. These are the principles that have carried this great country to greater heights. These are the principles that will carry us towards our aspirations for the future; a future of shared prosperity and a future when all Namibians will become beneficiaries of the abundant wealth and beauty which the Almighty has bestowed upon us.

Before I continue, let me point out the fact that all three of Namibia's Presidents are present at today's opening of Parliament. We have the Founding Father Comrade Nujoma, the second President Comrade Pohamba and Yours Truly. It is a unique situation anywhere in the world, to see a sitting President and former Presidents regularly attending events together. When the three of us travelled to Havana last year to attend the memorial of the late Commandante Fidel Castro, many leaders and dignitaries from other countries that were also in attendance remarked at the uniqueness of the unity between us. This is a unique legacy, it is a

Namibian legacy; a legacy born in the blood, sweat and tears of struggle and a legacy which will culminate in the realisation of a peaceful, united and prosperous Namibia. Let us therefore value it, appreciate it, cherish it and protect it.

Last Wednesday, I opened the 2017 Legal Year and this morning I opened the first deliberative Cabinet meeting of 2017. Now I am opening the 5th Session of the 6th Parliament, meaning that all three branches of Government are up and running for the year 2017.

As we mark the Opening of the 5th Session of our 6th Parliament, let us first and foremost, rededicate ourselves to God, who has made and has given us this beautiful country we call home. Let us rededicate ourselves to our core national values of peace, unity, reconciliation and justice. Let us rededicate ourselves to the spirit of togetherness, the spirit of Harambee and finally, let us rededicate ourselves to fulfilling our promise of a future of prosperity for each and every inhabitant of the Namibian House.

In keeping with the narrative of rededication, I believe that it is crucial that I quote from the preamble of our Constitution, in case we forget it, which amongst others, reads as follows, "*Whereas we the people of Namibia - have finally emerged victorious in our struggle against colonialism, racism and apartheid; are determined to adopt a Constitution which expresses for ourselves and our children our resolve to cherish and to protect the gains of our long struggle; desire to promote amongst all of us the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Namibian nation among and in association with the nations of the world; will strive to achieve national reconciliation and to foster peace, unity and a common loyalty to a single state; committed to these principles, have resolved to constitute the Republic of Namibia as a sovereign, secular, democratic and unitary State securing to all our citizens justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity*" Let us ponder these words for a moment and rededicate ourselves as Our

Constitution says, to protect the gains of our long and bitter struggle, leaving no room for the enemies of unity and peace, to plant their sordid ideas of tribalism, racism, instability and conflict on any inch of our Namibian soil.

Honourable Speaker,

The origins of Parliaments and similar assemblies can be traced back hundreds of years ago. For centuries, Parliaments have acted as the central institutions of many systems of government. Despite their ancient origins, they seem to be infinitely adaptable and their numbers have increased and developed manifold in modern times.

Parliament's role within our system of governance is highly significant, given the fact that a parliamentary form of government acknowledges the fact that parliament derives its power directly from the consent of the people, expressed through periodic elections and that it exists to implement the will of the people. Our parliamentary system also provides the most suitable platform to execute a participatory democratic system and active interaction between the people and their representatives. The Executive is also obliged to be accountable to Parliament. Accountability of the Executive to Parliament is based on the principle that since Parliament represents the will of the people, it should be able to hold the Executive accountable at all times – responsibly.

As leaders, we have been elected by the people - the electorate. We should all therefore endeavour to serve our people to the best of our abilities, embracing the principles of accountability and transparency as we carry out our day to day functions, in order to maintain the trust of the electorate; for accountability plus transparency equals trust.

Honourable Speaker,

In the spirit of self-sacrifice, devotion and loyalty to upholding the interests of the electorate, let us this year, rededicate ourselves to maintaining the quorum of Parliament. Let us be committed in the process of carrying out our duties, for as A.R Rahman once said, "When you do something with a lot of honesty, appetite and commitment, the input reflects in the output." Let us therefore have an orderly Parliament for 2017; one in which you, as leaders, will demonstrate honesty, appetite and commitment, so that your input will reflect in a positive output for the whole of Namibia.

The Right Honourable Prime Minister, who is the head of Government business in Parliament, has outlined your work program, and you should all be ready to deliver positive outcomes this year. Don't forget that Parliament is the political nerve centre of our country. You are the mirror of the society, accommodating the needs of these ever evolving times and shouldering the responsibilities bestowed upon you by the electorate. This year, as always, you will be expected to perform a variety of functions, which will include ensuring executive accountability, law making, controlling the budget and constituency functions. Furthermore, you will also carry out representational roles, educational roles, informational functions as well as training and recruitment of leadership.

I have perused the list of Bills that may be tabled in the National Assembly for the upcoming Financial Year. Since most of you are aware of these Bills and in the interest of time, I will not list them all, but there are those that have caught my attention, such as the Combating of Abuse of Drugs Bill; Education Bill; Financial Institutions and Markets Bill; Micro Lending Bill; Namibian Property Practitioners Bill and Trafficking in Persons Bill.

As you are all aware, while delivering my address at the Opening of the Legal Year last week, I announced that the tabling of the Land Bill will be postponed in favour of a National Dialogue, at which the Land issue will be thoroughly interrogated, before a way forward is identified. This decision was after I had engaged the Honourable Minister of Land Reform, the Vice

President and the Prime Minister. It is pertinent that we approach the land issue with utmost sincerity and clarity, since we have become aware that land is being used by a number of discontented individuals and groups from various quarters, as a fuse which they hope will ignite an explosion of chaos in our country.

I have said on many occasions that there is nothing wrong with belonging to tribes. Our tribes are part and parcel of our genealogy and African heritage, and we should be proud of who we are. But let us avoid the placing the ism at the end of the word tribal. We should never lose sight of the fact that the Namibian House, which we are building on the cornerstones of democracy, unity, the rule of law, peace and stability, is a house characterized by inclusivity and pluralism. It is a house in which all Namibians are united by the need for economic emancipation and inclusive economic development. It is strange that certain people are displaying a great determination to ridicule the concepts which we have put in place in order to accelerate our development. Let us disappoint them by succeeding.

Honourable Speaker,

The tabling, and subsequent passing of Bills during the upcoming year will depend on our ability and commitment towards remaining united and holding hands, across all political affiliations and across the three Organs of State; the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary. I therefore urge everyone to rededicate themselves in order to ensure that we work hard, engaging in respectful debates regarding these bills, so that we pass laws that are aimed at improving the lives of Namibians as per the ideals of the Namibian Constitution.

Honourable Speaker,

We are all cognizant of the reality facing us amidst the current economic headwinds. We have our work cut out this year, as we attempt to achieve

maximum results with minimum resources. The task may be daunting, but Namibia is not called the Land of the Brave for nothing. We have been elected to deliver on a promise of a better future and it is a promise we cannot rescind no matter what challenges we face.

Jomo Kenyatta once said, "Our children may learn about heroes of the past. Let us make ourselves architects of the future." It is my firm belief that Namibians possess the ability, courage and determination to overcome the multitude of challenges that lie before us. Bound by our patriotism and united by our common purpose, we will hurdle all obstacles in our way, as our forefathers have done in the past, to fulfil our purpose as the architects of the future, by steering our nation towards the prosperity which is its destiny.

Since my task today is merely to open Parliament, I shall not elaborate on too many issues. I will leave that for another day, when I return to Parliament for the State of the Nation Address. That being said, it is now my honour to declare the 5th Session of the 6th Parliament officially open.

May Almighty God Bless you all. May God Bless the Republic of Namibia.