

ADDRESS BY HON HEIKO LUCKS

ON THE APPROPRIATION BILL,

5 MARCH 2014

Thank you, Honorable Speaker.

As I rise today for my contribution to the debate on the National Budget, may I start off by expressing my utmost disbelief that we are now in the second year without a Deputy Minister of Finance. Let me be clear that I have confidence in the abilities of the Minister, but let me be also clear that I find it absolutely unacceptable that she, for such a prolonged time has had to operate without a Deputy. Is this perhaps a sign that the President does not consider this Ministry important enough to appoint a Deputy. Or Perhaps the President is faced with the dilemma that there are no suitable, competent Members of Parliament within the ranks of his party that could be appointed to such an important position. Perhaps the President will inform the Nation about this unacceptable situation during his State of the Nation address.

Honorable Speaker, Honorable Members. During her budget statement on 19 February 2014, the Minister has again painted a rosy picture of the general situation that we Namibians find ourselves in. But she also pointed out the many challenges that we, as a nation face. What was interesting to note was the subdued and uninspiring way in which she spoke about Governments achievements, as if she herself was not

100% convinced about the list of stated achievements. Similarly, she listed the challenges we are facing, and I hasten to say that those are exceedingly serious challenges that need our urgent attention, without showing much passion for solutions and policy interventions that are required to overcome these.

I run the risk of repeating much of what has been said about the 2014 Budget already. But I am also of the opinion that repetition is one of the best ways to ensure that a message, as well as the importance thereof, is clearly understood. Some of the messages that I would like to repeat are the following:

1. The fact that no increase in old-age pensions has been announced is unacceptable. An increase only every second year will continue to increase the destitute of our senior citizens as prices of basic goods and services needed to lead a decent and worthy life are increasing much more regularly than only every two years.

2. The massive increase in debt year after year means that we are on a dangerous path of peril. I have mentioned this in previous years and the Minister will not convince me that this growth in debt is within control, especially when the growth is at a rate of a staggering 27.2 %. Our mushrooming debt will haunt us in the years to come.

3. TIPEEG has been a massive failure. Very few permanent jobs have been created. Jobs were mainly created in the construction of infrastructure and as soon as these projects have been completed, most jobs have been lost again. Perhaps that is the reason why the Minister has only mentioned figures about temporary jobs **created** through TIPEEG but has been silent about the number jobs that have been **lost** in the same time in our overall economy.

