

REMARKS BY TOM K ALWEENDO
BUDGET CONTRIBUTION - MARCH 2016

Honorable Speaker

Honorable Members

As elected representatives of the people, our main responsibility is that of building a future for the Namibian people. Not only do the people expect us to build a future - but to build a future where Namibia stands tall among the nations of the world. A future where all Namibians are moving forward with confidence - confident that their lives and that of the future generations are changing for the better. Not only that their lives are improving in terms of material wellbeing but also in terms of social wellbeing.

I commend the Minister of Finance, Hon Calle Schlettwein, for having tabled a budget that gives us the tools to build that future. It is my view that the budget responds fittingly to building Namibia's future – especially in the following respects.

1. The budget emphasizes the importance of growing the economy as the only sure way to successfully create jobs for the jobless Namibians and thereby addressing the persistent inequality so prevalent in our society. This will be done by appropriately investing in the right areas of the economy, such as investing in certain infrastructure without which no meaningful economic growth can take place.

2. The budget makes it possible for us to continue to build the necessary skills we need for the economy of the future. It has been proven many times that countries that have developed their economies successfully are those who invested in skills development. The world has also changed such that not just any skill will do – what we need is skills that are relevant and skills that are advanced. For this to materialize there is a great need to fully embrace innovation – innovation in our thinking and in what we choose to do.

3. The budget also makes it possible for us to continue building a fair and just society where inclusivity is our watchword. Sustainable development can be assured only when we intentionally nurture a caring society where the strongest among us feel compelled to act in solidarity with the weakest among us; where minorities do not feel to be made objects of ridicule by the majority; where the youth are afforded the necessary opportunity to fulfill their ambitions; and where our senior citizens feel that their contributions to what Namibia is today is appreciated. A nation that feels as one - the one that not only recognizes but also encourages the contribution of everyone - is in a better position to overcome the development challenges that lie ahead of us.

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As a developing and relatively young Nation, we are certainly in a privileged position where we have financial resources – although not sufficient - to enable us to build the future we want. There are countries that are in a precarious

position where up to 40% of their budget is funded with donated financial resources. We thus ought to be proud of ourselves and encourage the Minister of Finance to continue strengthening our revenue collection efforts.

On our part – the ones that are responsible for spending our financial resources on the people’s behalf – it is our obligation, therefore, to ensure that we utilize our resources in the most prudent manner. In the manner that will allow us to do what matters most in the process of building the future our people deserve. We cannot and should not fail them in this regard.

Honorable Speaker

Let us also not be tempted to believe that money alone can solve all our development challenges. To think that with more money we can somehow deliver the future effortlessly. While it is important to have a budget that is appropriately framed in building our future, we must also recognize the importance of cultivating the right sets of societal values – values that are conducive to building our desired future. For example, we need to nurture a society that believes in our ability to achieve great things. A society that is not afraid to think big and not prepared to listen to those who tell us that it cannot be done.

We need to build a society that is not too satisfied with a status quo - not always contented with things as they are today but also prepared to think about how things can be tomorrow. To inspire a culture that is less obsessed with instant gratification that in all likelihood will undermine our long-term potential. To cherish a culture that believes that our existence – individually and collectively -

cannot change without taking some personal responsibility and risk in acting. And that doing nothing may well be the biggest risk one can ever take. Without these values our efforts to build a great future will yield less than optimal results.

I thus support the budget unreservedly and call upon all of us to make good use of the availed financial resources in the construction of a confident future for all the Namibians.