

04 March 2014

## 2014/2015 BUDGET INTERVENTION

I once again would like to commend the Hon. Minister of Finance for tabling a budget that is in synch with the nation's development agenda – a budget whose spending priorities in spite of incessant criticism in this Chamber, is beautifully aligned with the Fourth National Development Plan. Substantial allocations made over the MTEF period to key sectors of health and education although not adequate relatively speaking, will go a long way in addressing gaping infrastructural needs as well as delivery and quality imperatives confronting these sectors.

Hon. Speaker, Hon. Members, it is encouraging to note that Namibia is at long last taking steps to embrace the concept of the "Digital Economy" which will undoubtedly improve the efficiency of our operations while at the same time ensuring that our nation emerge from the self imposed digital orphanage. All other things being equal, digital inclusion and ict has potential to accelerate economic progress. This in turn, will place our nation in better stead in terms of pursuing higher levels of economic growth needed in order to stay the course of the set economic growth trajectory. As the Hon. Minister of Finance alluded to in her budget motivation, the advent of mobile telephony has enabled our nation to make giant strides in its quest to ensure financial and social inclusion.

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Provided we overcome perennial challenges such as low internet penetration, affordability of mobile connectivity, pervasive poverty rates and unreliable supporting infrastructure such as roads and electricity in rural areas, improved mobile penetration in our country, is a necessary pre-requisite for improved productivity. This therefore calls for greater alignment of the fiscal policy with the goals of the digital growth agenda. That notwithstanding, our nation still continues to be on the periphery and is constantly playing catch up in leveraging the potential of mobile telephony in delivering efficient and cost effective services in four sectors in particular. These are: the Financial sector where we have already witnessed the emergence of ewallet and most recently, the partnership between two Namibian entities MTC and Mobi Pay that will make it easy to conclude transactions using mobile phones. Traditional long queues at banks; the usual sea of agitated and frustrated customers during month end not to mention unmanned offices at the end of every month, will soon be a thing of the past. The health sector where last month we witnessed the historic launch of a mobile application developed by a Namibian – an application that heralds the advent of a new era that will obviate the perennial trek and stampede for places at maternity wards by expectant mothers. The agricultural sector where farmers need not trek long distances at great cost to either establish prices offered for their produce or consult the nearest veterinarian for an opinion. Indeed, the education sector where the mobile phone, provided we are bold enough and revise the existing policy which is inhibitive, can make teaching and learning virtual thus breaking the current classroom boundaries.

Yes, there are seamless opportunities for Namibia to use the transformative capacity of mobile phones to embrace Mbanking, Mhealth, Magriculture and Meducation. I therefore hope and trust that now that we have exited the analogue mode of delivering services, we will midwife the convenient, efficient and cost effective digital way of transacting our business operations.

I am encouraged by the much improved revenue out turn. However, I am equally saddened by the low capital budget implementation rate. This trend is worrisome and demands the institution of decisive interventions at all levels of government, that is at the national, regional and local level. Four years ago while making my maiden speech in this chamber, I advocated for a more robust and ruthless approach to service delivery and accountability. An approach where there are real consequences (not only implied) for non delivery. The recent discovery by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs that money earmarked for the provision of flush toilets to residents of Koes in the Karas region is likely to be retained to Treasury, is a classical example of unparalleled tolerance and condonation of non-delivery. Such failure compel fellow Namibians in Koes to continue to rely on the remnants of a vile sanitary system whose usage evokes bad memories of the days gone by. Question is Is such failure deliberate so that nationals can point a finger at the national government? And most importantly, will there be consequences for such blatant non-delivery?

Let me conclude by saying that I was moved by a sticker on a vehicle and in actual felt extremely proud although with a bit of apprehension to be a member of the ruling Party. The sticker says “SWAPO *the Party we Trust*”. This sticker speaks volumes in terms of the trust that Namibians have in us as a governing Party. However, it is equally masked in the inherent expectation that as a governing Party, we will remain true to our promise to deliver the requisite services. Trust is a virtue that we should never take for granted. If we allow such flagrant dutiful obligations to deliver and by the way we will be doing so at our own peril, we risk losing the priceless trust that many Namibians have bestowed on us. As we all know, it takes time for lost trust to regenerate. Being in leadership positions is not a popularity contest. It is about not shying away from taking decisions, popular or unpopular that will deliver our organizations, our country from mediocrity and stagnation and instead propel us to excellence and prosperity. It is about time that we gravitate from rhetoric to action.

With this modest contribution, I support the Bill and Thank You