

**STATEMENT BY HON NETUMBO NANDI-NDAITWAH, THE
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION,
SECOND READING DEBATE OF THE APPROPRIATION
BILL, 2016/17**

Hon Speaker

Honourable Members

First I congratulate the people of Namibia, women in particular as we mark the 8th March Women's International Day. I am more particularly comforted that we have more women in the chamber this time around.

Allow me now to congratulate the Minister of Finance, Hon Calle Schlettwein and his team for presenting a forward looking budget which clearly shows us that we are on the right track as a nation towards prosperity, as articulated in the 2014 SWAPO Party Election Manifesto.

The Namibian Government like many Governments is managing its affairs based on set laws, policies, rules and procedures. In this context, the tabling of the budget on the 25th February 2016 is within the context of set principles. As a rule, before the Appropriation Bill budget becomes law, it has to be scrutinised by the lawmakers in both the National Assembly and National Council. Hence, the current debate on the budget in this Honourable House.

It is essential to note that budget is all about how the scarce resources are distributed among the competing sectors. It must also be noted that, money has been and continues to be a scarce commodity worldwide. As such, budget allocation and utilisation demands financial prudence by applying the concept of achieving more with less. As Ministries do have different missions to fulfil, budget submissions and allocations do differ from one Ministry to another.

Ministries' budget allocations are therefore, determined by external and internal factors of which Honourable Members need to understand and appreciate.

Honourable Members,

The mission of the Namibian Defence Force is one that is not always easily understood. However, this mission is very demanding as it can determine whether we will live or die. I have noted that, when the debate on the budget started, among the first bullets fired from the opposition bench was on the Defence vote. The Defence budget was viewed by some Members as unwarranted given that the country is not at war. But those who have expressed views against the Defence budget have made so out of ignorance about the defence and security issues. Their criticism were not measured and qualified against the conventional Defence's mission of any country.

As appeared in the Namibian Sun, of the 7th March 2016, Hon Vipuakuje Muharukua had the following to say, "We are at peace now which means soldiers are remunerated simply for being in barracks. Why can they not be used to deliver drought relief or to give assistance during floods when there is relief needed?" First and foremost, this statement made by a lawmaker should be condemned in strongest term as it belittling men and women in uniforms who have decided to sacrifice in defence of Namibia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Second, such statement gives a wrong message to the public as it is a misrepresentation of facts. It must be underscored that, the Namibian Defence Force is the only instrument of the state that shall serve as the last resort on which the state shall rely on when all other security elements of national power have failed.

The Namibian Defence Force is an element of national power charged with the responsibility to maintain peace and defend this country and all its citizens at all cost. The Namibian Defence Force like all other Defence Forces is a public good that serves the interest of all people.

Gone are the days when Defence Forces across the globe are considered as killing machines only. Defence Forces do contribute immensely to socio-economic development and wellbeing of people of which the Namibian Defence Force has been doing exceptional well.

As Namibia is prone to acute droughts and floods, the only guarantor to rescue the nation from catastrophe is the Namibian Defence Force. Let me put the record very clear, the Namibian Defence Force has made immeasurable contribution by saving the lives of our people during drought relief and floods when the nation was faced with catastrophic disasters. The Namibian Defence Force has a reputation of ferrying people to the highlands during flood. Our Defence Force is also renowned for having transported thousands of tons of food and other necessities to the needy people during disasters. That contribution has been going on for years and even continues till date. As a person who has been assigned to oversee disaster and risk management in the country, I can say with confidence that even in the current drought we are experiencing in the country, one way or the other, the Namibian Defence Force has been a reliable partner in drought relief management and distribution. One wonders why then Hon Muharukua is so blind not to see what is happening within the public domain. Therefore, opposing the Defence budget allocation is tantamount to gambling with own lives and the sovereignty of the Land of the Brave.

It is also imperative for the benefit of those who may not be aware to underline and reflect on some fundamental principles on which the Namibian Defence Force operates. Chapter 15, Article 115 of our Constitution stipulates that “there shall be establishment by Act of Parliament a Defence Force... to defend the territory and national interests of Namibia”. Furthermore, Vision 2030 stipulates that, “there is need to formulate and implement coherent modernisation plan for procurement of modern military hardware and maintain a credible

defence posture that is quantitatively on par with the best defence force in the region”. In the same vein, Namibia’s Foreign Policy asserts that, “without peace and security, no meaningful development and stability can be achieved” Also, the SADC Mutual Defence Pact article (4) and (6) call for “military preparedness, collective self-defence and action to maintain peace, stability and security in the region”. And at the continental level, the African Union has put in place Security Policy Framework for the establishment of the African Standby Force which is made up by regional Standby Forces. A classic example is the SADC intervention Brigade deployed in DRC.

All the above statements and programmes demand a capable and credible Defence Force with dedicated budget. We must be mindful that, even nations that have been in existence for hundreds of years are still strengthening their Defence Forces to be able to withstand and effectively deal with defence and security threats. It must be underpinned that credible Defence Forces are not established only when there is real threat hanging over people’s heads. Credible Defence Forces are built anchored on the Defence Forces’ constitutional missions, assumptions and perceived threat. They are created on assumptions that there might be security threat one day. Nations that relent and become complacent by hoping that there shall be no emerging national threats shall do that at own peril and possibly demise. The internal political and security system is dynamic and as a government we must always be prepared.

Before I conclude, it is important to inform this August House that the Namibian Defence Force has made contributions to peace beyond our borders. Our men and women in uniforms members of the Namibian Defence Force were deployed to Cambodia, Angola and Liberia for UN Peace Mission. They have also served and continue to serve as Military Observers and Staff Officers for Peace Support Operations under UN or AU. The deployment to DRC of the Namibian Defence Force together with some SADC Member States for combat from

1998 to 2001 prevented the fall of that country into the hands of the invaders. It has also to be recognised that the deployment of the Namibian Defence Force and other Defence Forces to DRC has to a certain extent contributed to the world peace, security and stability. It has to be understood that contribution towards world peace, security and stability is a contribution to world socio-economic development.

Therefore, Hon. Members, as we debate the budget, we must sought clear understanding to enable us to have a meaningful debate, mission based and aimed at fiscal discipline, effective and efficient utilisation of scarce resources as opposed to focusing on political gains. I support the Bill.

Thank you

