

Budget Statement

By

Hidipo Hamutenya, MP

Leader of the opposition in Parliament

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Thank you, Mr. Speaker for according me this opportunity to make a brief observation on the recent minister's budget statement. I wish first of all to commend her for remaining faithful, in formulating and presenting the budget, to what she terms are over arching goals of the nation through this house. Her speech always stresses the three overarching goals of the government, namely, the yearning to achieve economic growth, the burning desire to alleviate poverty and doing away with the socio-economic inequity in this society. Every year, these goals are given the prominent position in the Ministers' budget statement thereby indicating quite clearly that these goals are of utmost importance in her mind. This overriding pre-occupation with these issues is a very clear, patriotic indication that deserves our recognition and our public praise, despite the apparent inability on her party to do anything concrete to overcome these challenges. But the very fact that she manages to always bring these concerns to the attention of the nation, as burning issues, is very noble. But to restate commitment to these goals of ever deepening poverty and socio-economic inequity in the country which have their basis in stagnation of the economy, on one hand, and the pathetic reality of the SWAPO government's inability to come up with concrete measures to realize these goals, leaves the nation wondering as

to whether the cabinet as a whole is standing behind the minister in the search for a speedy solution to these problems.

If the minister were enjoying the full collective support of her cabinet team why is the team not able to show a firm resolve and make concerted effort to overcome the challenges and realize the nations overarching priorities or goals? The cabinet is expected to have priorities among priorities and for now, one cannot imagine of a more burning priority than those three which the minister has repeatedly characterized as overarching?

Mr. Speaker, as you know, for some 15 years, I served as cabinet minister and my recollection of those long years is not of the cabinet being a force that always works together to achieve priorities that have been agreed upon. This probably explains why the nation is not able to overcome the problem of economic stagnation, ever-widening income inequity and ballooning poverty?

I know that job creation has always been a big challenge since the end of the liberation struggle in this country. Job creation became an important task of this country as a newly independent nation, and I as Minister of Trade & Industry, I had to seriously look into that issue of job creation. Among the measures we took was the establishing of an EPZ regime, through which we brought Ramatex to this country. But as we launched the EPZ programme I came to realize that I did not have the undivided support of all the cabinet colleagues. And when the unions and their supporters launched their campaign against Ramatex, I could not really count on the unified support of the cabinet. Some of the comrades supported the undertaking fully; some others wavered in their support. As we were trying

to save Ramatex and the 7000 (Seven-Thousand) Namibians it was employing, another cabinet colleague came up with another major project, the Green Scheme Project. That scheme, too, did not receive undivided attention. But since the Green Scheme, unlike Ramatex, did not involve foreign direct investment, the executive, when asked to fund the Green Scheme, vacillated for over a decade claiming that the money required could not be raised to implement that key project. But today the government seems to have found a way of raising that money.

I am mentioning these projects to show that Knee-jerking support in cabinet is a potent weapon to frustrate progress in the government. This is why many major projects, envisaged for the development of the country, such as, the construction of Neckertal Dam and the Kudu Gas projects in the Karas region and the Walvis Bay desalination plant are not taking-off as urgently as they should. For decades now, these major development projects have remained mere aspirations, as their implementation have gotten stuck in the bureaucratic machinery of the government.

The minister seems to have awakened to the ugly reality of prevarication and delaying tactics by her colleague ministers and their bureaucrats. The adoption of the TIPEEG strategy in 2011 is an indication of this. TIPEEG was clearly adopted to fast track implementation of projects by circumventing the normal bureaucratic routes of tendering, tender corruption and other bureaucratic ways.

It needs to be stressed that the undoing of this government has been the inability to implement agreed upon projects and programs and carrying them out transparently, thus avoiding corruption and those who work to

advance it. Although TIPEEG has not been a solution to the undoing of the government that is the delaying tactics and prevarication to implement capital projects, it has signaled the awakening to the problem of the delay's of implementation.

I have sympathy with the minister of Finance about her desire to realize the overarching goals regarding lack of economic growth, poverty and socio-economic inequity in the country.

In conclusion I wish to state that I support the budget.

Thank you Mr. Speaker