

BUDGET DEBATE
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Honourable Speaker,

Honourable Members,

Thank you very much for giving the floor.

Hon Speaker, I am at pains when perusing the previous budgets plus the current one. If you look back at the previous budgets you will see these documents decorated with beautiful titles, such as pro-poor, people-centred and so on and so forth. However, the poor is still dying from hunger and starvation, many are still feeding from the dumpsites around our towns and cities while others continue to sleep on empty stomachs.

Where is the problem? The problem is the way we set our priorities. For instance, you have hundreds of millions of dollars earmarked for constructing of new buildings here and there. This is not a priority.

I want to suggest that let's spend money to:

- Improve rural water supply
- Construct water catchment dams to catch water during the rainy seasons
- Support communal farmers with sufficient funding
- Make land available to the poor in towns and cities
- Introduce solar electrification for housing for the poor
- Award construction tenders to Namibian companies instead of foreigners, etc.

Hon Speaker, I also agree that our economy is still not in our hands up to now. Imagine 24 years of independence. One Hon Member said we are sleeping while foreigners are stealing our wealth. That is not the case. Foreigners are not stealing because they are there at our behest. We have given them a free ticket to do exactly what they are doing.

It is also true that the land question is still not yet resolved. However, what is disturbing is because it is being raised by the Hon Members from the ruling party (SWAPO). The Namibian electorate mandated

the Swapo led government for the past 24 years to redress the wrongs of the past but instead they are still blaming colonialism.

Hon Speaker, Hon Members, you might recall that before we closed business last week I was on the floor but time could not allow me to finish my debate. At that stage I was lecturing on Black Economic Empowerment. I was saying that when we talk about black economic empowerment in relation to formerly disadvantaged we must also consider both the currently advantaged and the currently disadvantaged because you have a small group of the politically well-connected who happened to be greedy and they grab all the available opportunities. You go to mining they are there, fishing they are there, agriculture they are there, construction they are there, the list is long. Please understand that I am not against anybody but I am seriously against this absurd mentality of empowering only a small number of people while the majority are being denied the same opportunities. Within the currently disadvantaged group fellow white Namibians are also there, but we continue to blame them for the wrongs of the past. If this chronic disease is not stopped now, what are you

going to say to the white Namibian children who were born at independence and thereafter? Therefore, the term 'black economic empowerment' has no relevance any longer. We should try to empower all our people irrespective of colour or creed, sex, social status or ethnic origin.

Hon Speaker, allow me to move to another subject which is closest to my heart. This is none other than the informal economy. Many people who have been systematically dispossessed of the opportunity to have decent work and dignity as human beings are forced to engage in informal sector activities as their main work to sustain themselves and their dependents. Namibia's unemployment rate is comparatively very high and a certain percentage of this has entered the informal sector for survival. Disappointingly there is an influx of new entrants in our informal sector as a result of informal cross-border trade. Many Namibians especially women who used to sell tomatoes, onions and so on have been forced to close down their businesses due to the tough competition in the market. Foreign traders have proven to be more advanced in terms of business acumen and experience than their local

counterparts. I am talking about people who can pick flowers from your garden while you are sleeping and sell the same flowers to you the next morning (after adding some little value of course). They are even connected to suppliers as opposed to local traders. These suppliers can deliver the goods to them wherever they find themselves. Our people cannot be competitive because there is no sufficient support for them. I therefore, wish to recommend that sufficient credit be made available to those in informal sector and even enable them to study at vocational training centres. This will enable them to acquire new skills so that in the long run they could graduate from small to medium enterprises, etc.

Regarding the invasion of our informal sector by foreign traders and also as I am aware of the regional economic integration I would like to find out from the Ministry of Trade and Industry whether Namibia has formerly put in place a policy to regulate informal cross border trade (ICTB)?

Lastly Hon Speaker, I don't want talk about the wanton destruction of Kambashus in the informal settlements. I also don't want to refer to the incident that took place recently at Goreangab area. We see

the same phenomenon at DRC settlement in Swakopmund and also at Area-7 in Luderitz. All these people are going through similar pains. And they are asking - how long will the Namibian people be made more frustrated by their own leaders?

It defies logic to remove poor people from their place of dwelling and render them homeless while at the same time selling land to the politicians for peanuts. The government must make it clear to the people of this country whether their goal is to promote the economic wellbeing of the politicians or to maximise the wellbeing of society as a whole.

Hon Speaker, in conclusion since evictions have become the order of the day whereby people are evicted from:

- a) Their houses by banks
- b) Street markets
- c) Eviction from their shacks by city police whereas they need to institute litigation for unlawful detention, assault, etc.

I recommend that more funding be made available for the Directorate of Legal Aid in order to make justice accessible to the poor.

I thank you!

