



**STATEMENT MADE BY HON. APIUS !AUXAB, MP AND PRESIDENT
OF THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT (UDF) OF NAMIBIA,
IN RESPONSE TO THE BUDGET STATEMENT FOR
THE 2018/2019 FINANCIAL YEAR.**

Hon. Speaker

Hon. Members,

As I begin to make my remarks on the current budget, let me first and foremost congratulate Hon. Mr. Calle Schlettwein, Minister of Finance for tabling a budget which he aptly themed as “**Shared Prosperity**”. I want to share his believe that going forward Namibian citizens of all walks of life will share in this anticipated prosperity.

Hon. Speaker,

Hon Members,

Any budget has a specific purpose, broadly speaking it is to give details of government's expenditure and revenue generation plan for a specific year, in this case 2018/2019 financial year. It is further expected to give a vision of hope, of jobs and wealth creation, and of a robust economy that supports a thriving private sector.

Not surprisingly, the current budget as per Hon. Schlettwein's view, is a funding compact for growth, bringing about jobs, less inequality, less poverty and improved service delivery with a clear objective of mobilizing and aligning resources to support long-term economic growth and social development.

I want to commend the Hon. Minister for presenting such a brilliant document despite the strong economic headwinds we are facing. Whether the different allocations in this budget support the afore-said realities remains to be seen. As they say, the devil is in the detail. We need to see the detail as we go ahead in discussing the various votes.

Hon. Speaker,

Hon. Members,

The budget provides for a total government spending of N\$ 65. B (Sixty Five Billion Namibia Dollars) for 2018/2019 financial year with a revenue of N\$ 56. 7 B (Fifty Six point seven Billion Namibia Dollars). This leave us with a budget deficit of N\$ 8.3 (Eight point three Billion Namibia Dollars).

Hon Speaker,

Hon. Members,

I am mindful of the Hon. Minister's intend to reduce this budget shortfall. However, I want to urge the Hon. Minister to, in all seriousness, look at Governments spending patterns and if need be to introduce some kind of punishment for those Government Department which overspend.

As long as there is no accountability from the Administrative Heads of Government Departments, and as long as we as Parliamentarians do not demand accountability from those entrusted with these monies, our exercise to want to cut spending will be futile. While I applaud the Hon. Minister for his tax initiative programme, more still needs to be done to collect taxes, especially in the four – O Regions.

At the same time, **Hon. Speaker**, our debt still remains too high at, N\$ 83, 7B (Eighty three point seven Billion Namibia Dollars) for 2018/2019 which is equivalent to 45, 3 % of the GDP(Gross Domestic Product). We need to get it down. Not for ideological reasons but because excessive debt undermines our economic security and leaves us vulnerable to shocks. Equally it cannot be right to spend more on debt interest than any other vote in this budget.

Hon. Speaker,

Hon. Members,

I passionately believe that the best way to improve the lives of our people across the length and breadth of this country of ours is to help them get into employment. Hon. Speaker, I am acutely aware that 37% of Namibia's working population is out of work and that from this

37%, 45% are young able bodied people. This is based on the report entitled: "Status of the Namibian Economy", authored by the National Planning Commission.

It is therefore our responsibility as the Government to create conditions that are helpful for the private sector to invest and employ our people. Hon, Speaker, bringing about jobs is one of the items of the funding compact, therefore appropriate funding should be catered for, for this purpose.

I am happy to note that the lion's share of the budget goes to the social sector – Education, Arts and Culture; Health and Social Services; Higher Education, Training and Innovation, that is N\$ 23,3 B (Twenty three point three Billion Namibia Dollars) and that this has increased over time.

However, I am continuously at pains with the allocation given to the security cluster especially the allocation for the Ministry of Defense which happen to be the third highest, i.e. N\$ 5.9 B (Five point nine Billion Namibia Dollars) allocation in the current budget. Maybe, I am missing something here !!!, are we in an eminent threat of war to the effect that we are stockpiling military weapons or what?. I will wait to hear from

the Hon. Minister of Defense once we start the debate over the final budget.

I would have love to see that more resources be allocated to the Health budget (vote) were we are faced with challenges like Hepatitis – E and the threat of Listeriosis.

Hon. Speaker,

Hon. Members,

As I am concluding I wish to suggest that our budget should at all times be informed by the Shared Growth and Development Agenda as espouse by the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

Hon. Speaker,

Hon. Members,

I rest my case and will return during the discussion phase of the Budget.

I thank you.