

**CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCUSSION  
ON THE 2017 APPROPRIATION BILL  
AS TABLED BY THE MINISTER OF FINANCE**

**BY**

**HON. CLARA /GOWASES (MP, RP)**

**24 MARCH 2017**

**Honourable Speaker**

**Honourable Members**

Let me take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Finance and his team for the efforts and commitment in preparing yet another Budget. All of us know it takes a lot of effort and hard work to produce and introduce such a thorough document on time. Well done and congratulations.

And thus in doing so, I wish to commend<sup>t</sup> the government for the pro-poor budget, and more specifically the allocation of 3.3 billion to the Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare.

**Honourable Speaker**

**Honourable Members**

I would further like to comment and thank our President, Honourable Hage Geingob, for keeping his promises towards our elderly people and once again increasing their old age pension benefit from N\$ 1100 to N\$ 1200. He had promised that the elderly would receive an old age pension benefit of N\$<sup>1300</sup>~~1200~~ by the year 2018. And I am pleased to see that out of 3.3 billion allocated to the Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare 2.4 billion will provide for the old age pension fund.

**Honourable Speaker**

**Honourable Members**

~~12~~ (12) (2)6

I want to mention

### **Some of the challenges in the 2016/2017 Financial Year**

- The SACU contribution was lower than normal due to the ND 3 billion that we had to pay back to the SACU pool.
- In 2016/17 we also saw an expenditure reduction of about 8% compared to 2015/2016
- That was a reduction of about 14% of the previously budgeted figure for 2016/2017
- We have seen huge escalation in spending in the last 6 years
- At 38% of total expenditure, personnel expenditure was larger than normal
- The wage bill growth was driven by both number of employees and average wages
- Our average wages almost doubled from 2010 to 2016.
- Our wage increases are well ahead of inflation

### **Budget Balance**

The deficit for 2016/17 was forecast at N\$8.2 billion, down from N\$9.6 billion in 2015/16. That means 4.3% of GDP compared to 5.8% in 2015/2016.

As a party, we are deeply concerned with the social welfare of our people. Particularly the poorest of the poor who are unfortunately not in a position to look after their own wellbeing, my contribution today is mostly concentrated and focused on the recently established pilot program of the food bank.

To quote our Honourable President at the establishment of the pilot program, and I quote "It would be preposterous if the government were to build a facility which costs close to N\$ 100 million while our people are going to bed on empty stomachs"

1. We therefore observe from what our Honourable President stated that to build warehouses for all 14 regions will be a very costly exercise. It is thus more logical that this money to build and maintain these warehouses is rather used for the actual eradication of poverty, and not just to build a structure.
2. With previous experiences we encountered with drought relief food distributions

The following must be observed:

- a) If not properly managed food may become spoiled in such warehouses.
- b) Food within these warehouses may be stolen and otherwise go missing.
- c) Corruption in the form of nepotism and favoritism has a tendency of sticking out its ugly head in all areas of our society: hand-based distribution of food parcels on the ground to beneficiaries therefore carries the obvious danger that beneficiaries may be discriminated against on any of the above grounds I have mentioned. And sometimes it is even based on political reasons and even tribal and ethnic backgrounds.

These threats honorable members have all proven to be very real problems with the Food Bank and various newspaper reports have confirmed that food is being stolen and that the procedure for choosing to whom food should be allocated is rife with nepotism and corruption.

**Honourable Speaker**

## **Honourable Member**

I wish to raise the following questions and concerns in relation to the Food Bank:

- 1 Why does the government not set up one central office where people may come and apply for the benefit in order for better and proper management of applicants and beneficiaries?
- 2 Instead of using committees from within the community to determine who should be on the program and who not; the central office will be more qualified to approve applicants based on a predetermined criteria. Because using people from the same communities who will be beneficiaries to qualify or disqualified people from this community may bring strife and create conflict among community members in the long run.
- 3 Weighing up all these negative obstacles surrounding the establishment of warehouses and the qualification method currently being used to qualify or disqualify applicants, why does government not introduce a voucher system where approved beneficiaries received vouchers to go buy food at a

predetermined chain shop (e.g. Woermann Brock or Shoprite)  
of which the government has/may get an agreement for lower  
prices for these beneficiaries?

- ⑦
- 3 Weighing up all these negative obstacles surrounding the establishment of warehouses and the qualification method currently being used to qualify or disqualify applicants, why does government not introduce a voucher system <sup>for food stamp?</sup> where approved beneficiaries received vouchers to go buy food at a predetermined chain shop of which the government has/may get an agreement from this shop for example woerman brocke.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable members of this August house, fellow Namibians.

## **HOUSING**

1. Research shows an emphasis on housing as a catalyst for growth, thereby improving welfare standards and decreasing poverty levels. Therefore housing policy is an important component of anti-poverty interventions, with a direct impact on people's welfare through improving general living conditions, health and job creation through construction and renovation of houses. Government has repeatedly announced housing as a priority for Namibia, stating that it would contribute both to economic development and poverty alleviation. In addition, government seems well aware of that issues in

the delivery of housing. However, as we discuss issues of housing, we need to also look at accommodation for our many students in our colleges and universities. Poor access to proper and affordable housing can make our young people, especially the girls, vulnerable to behavior that can increase their risk of contracting HIV or unplanned pregnancies.

2. The noble good intention by former President His Excellency Pohamba to provide shelter to poorest of the poor through mass housing was misinterpreted by N.H.E. and turned into get rich quick scheme of the elites. Hence I propose enlarged katutura two bedroom houses with ceilings, proper roofs, electricity and inside toilets as basic and extension plans for further two bedrooms on a reasonable big erf. I further propose an expansion of local authorities 'technical part' to be equipped with heavy duty earth moving equipment for service of erven or empowerment of RCC, or line Ministry of local government to execute this duty, to drop the price of erven or houses. I further propose the local building contractors to be given 20 houses each to put bread on their tables rather than foreign companies to build expensive houses where the government will pay for this houses and again subsidize the lower income groups segment. Everyone must develop at his/her own pace. We have different needs.

## **EDUCATION**

1. Education is the mother of all disciplines. I agree fully that education is a joint national responsibility where we all are called upon to play a part. As an educator myself, education is and remains my passion. I really highly value the efforts that the Honorable Minister of Education, Culture and Arts and her staff has achieved so far. The programs that are being formulated and implemented gives hope for a brighter future.
2. I applaud the government for free Primary and Secondary education. As a former teacher I am concerned about the short comings of the Cambridge systems of Education. I want us to focus on the primary phase of education to lay a firm foundation for our children. Let us continue to train graduates at this level and produce more primary teachers. Learners don't master basic skills but yet are promoted to the next grade until they drop out at grade 10 & 12 level. This Cambridge system that failed 20% of learners that eventually ends up in the streets, year in and out. I once again call for the establishment of V.T.Cs and skills training institutions in all 14 regions to accommodate these drop outs and encourage technical jobs.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES**

1. We are worried about our National resources that are exported through E.P.L. mining licenses. We want ownership of our resources. When are we going to stop this issue where we don't have control over our own resources and become joint owners from production to profit, shares and dividends rather to sell of E.P.L's? How can we incorporate laws that will give a state of 10% to local and mining social empowerment groups. This will help the government to enable small community projects of SME industrial plight.

## **TOURISM**

1. Tourism is everyone's business. A sectorial approach to tourism will ensure that Namibia fully reaps its potential from tourism and thus will forego a full return on investment from the tourism sector as a country. Tourism development requires the involvement of all parts of the Namibian government from traditional authorities, local authorities to the national government. We all know that our beautiful, majestic country is an attraction to many tourists. Tourism in Namibia is a major industry. Contributing N\$ 7 billion to the country's gross domestic product. Annually nearly one million travelers visit Namibia. Tourism in Namibia also had a positive impact on resource conservation and rural development. Some more than 50 communal conservancies have been established across the country

covering 11.8 million hectares of land and resulting in enhanced land management, while providing tens of thousands of rural Namibians <sup>that supposed to have</sup> with much needed income.

## HEALTH SECTOR

1. We want to commend Hon. Dr Bernard Haufiku Minister of Health & Social Services and competent staff on their mega achievements over the past few years. We have observed magnificent changes in our Health sector. We have seen numerous hospitals are undergoing renovations and clinics and health centers are being built at different towns and villages and thus bringing of services closer to the people. We have seen how the ministry dealt with national pandemics and epidemics such as HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and Polio just to mention a few. Therefore we extend once more our gratitude towards the Honorable Minister and his entire staff for the provision of these services. Additionally, we are delighted that Namibia has joined SADC Member States that are implementing a Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, HIV and AIDS programme that is being spearheaded by the SADC Parliamentary Forum. It is pleasing that our Parliament has embraced this SADC PF Project and we have seen Members of Parliament participating in workshops to build their capacity of deal with SRHR, HIV and AIDS challenges facing our people, especially our young people.

If as a country we are to harness the demographic dividend that young people present, we must promote and protect their health so that they reach their full potential.

## **GENDER BASED VIOLENCE**

1. Women of Namibia is subjected to abuse, rape, brutal murder and landlessness. Most of our women are living on the outskirts of our towns and deprived of access to decent jobs, income or land. Many of them could not finish school because of factors beyond their control. Today they live with men who constantly abuse them they have nowhere to go. Today our news is full of women killing their partners out of frustration for constant abuse. We need programs to protect our women and heavy punishment for men who abuse them. The women need to know that they are protected. On that note I would like to suggest that as a country we take full advantage of the fact that we are the ones hosting the Secretariat of the SADC Parliamentary Forum which is collaborating with other organizations to eradicate GBV. It is important that as Members of Parliament we fully participate in these activities. However, we need support. Our Civil Society Organizations, United Nations agencies and our institutions of higher education must conduct research and share it with us so that we fully understand what is causing GBV in our country, how much GBV is costing us and how we can stop it. I know

that some research has been conducted. My feeling is that the findings from that research need to be simplified, shortened and made available to SADC PF so that as MPs we can access them.

In conclusion, I wish to state that we have in front of us a well prepared budget but it goes beyond figure as it will only become tangible to the people when implemented.

We have got a busy year ahead. We have got Namibians to be pulled out of poverty as a matter of urgency.

And now, we have the budget to make that possible. Let us not waste valuable time anymore. Let us all hit the ground running, for the sake of our people and our country.

Honourable Speaker

Honourable Members

Fellow Namibians

I Thank you.