

MAUREEN HINDA

Honourable Speaker

Honourable Member of Parliament

Fellow Namibians

1. I would like to sincerely thank the Minister of Finance for the tabling the budget in the manner that he has done. Hon. Speaker, it is not easy to be a Minister of Finance during challenging economic times.
2. The Minister has tried to apply limited financial resources to unlimited needs/wants in the face of social and political demands in the most efficient way in his judgement. The message of doing more with less is loud and clear if one looks through the allocation to the various sectors.
3. Hon. Speaker, doing more with less should not only be applied when we have economic decline but should be our motto. We have to avoid spillage ^{of resources} ~~of large~~ through ^{lack of} ~~im~~prudent management of public resources. At no point can it be said that we had enough resources to address our social and economic challenges, ^{but corruption makes it worse.}
4. Our society has been characterized by a wide gap between the have and the have not, or the rich and the poor. We cannot afford to allow that gulf to widen further lest we face the prospect of a social revolution.
5. Turning specifically to allocations, as an Accountant I would say the Minister of Finance is spot on in terms of addressing national priorities and to expedite poverty reduction, and eventual eradication as ^{directed} ~~espoused~~ in the Harambee Prosperity Plan under the given circumstances. ^{Let allow owners of property acquired through the allination scheme to sell, without let property be a sset to them too.}
6. I would like to make my point by highlighting ^{some} ~~three~~ sectors. The first is Education if combining higher and basic education that received the bulk of the budget allocation, viz, 27%, And about 25% to other social welfare and service sectors like Health, Poverty, Gender, Veteran Affairs & others

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7. . You would agree with me that education is the greatest equalizer, thus our highest priority. However, we could do better on Higher Education. We are here as lawmakers because of the level of education that we have attained, notwithstanding the fact that most of us come from humble backgrounds. Education opens the doors of opportunities and ensures upward social mobility. Allow me to mention that the biggest deterrent to education is sex including what the Health Minister termed as transactional sex, alcohol and drugs abuse. It is important that we engage learners and raise awareness of the danger there is in too early exposure to sex. As a Catholic I would preach abstinence but, we need to empower girls to know that they can say NO. I however agree that there is a need to reopen the debate to address the question of unwanted pregnancies, which leads to increase baby dumping or killing as well as backyard abortion and child marriages and Gender Based Violence. We need more support and protection for the girl-child especially.
8. Let me also add that, long-term human resource development interventions are important while the short-term import of ^{for} ~~se~~ example English & Science Teachers, Nurses or Engineers etc. ^{are necessary} Our envisaged society as described in vision 2030 can only be attained if we invest sufficiently in Research & Development for new knowledge, Technical, Vocational and Managerial skills coupled shared ethical and moral value systems. Financial Literacy which should include currency value. ^{for us to appreciate} It appears as if we not able to comprehend the value of our currency as everything run into millions. The Namibian Dollar is currently trading at about 12.6014 against the US\$. While the Tanzanian shilling is 2232.94 against the US\$ just to illustrate my point.
9. The about 25% increase in allocation of Agriculture deserves a positive welcome, as well as our efforts to manage the AU target per the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Plan as we have reached the target of 10% of the total Budget. This is indeed a very important economic and social sector as it caters for close to 70% of our population. The prospects for increase in agriculture production looks promising for the whole of SADC, thanks to the Cyclone Dineo unlike the Hurricane Katrina.

10. In as much as I understand the in inenviable position of the Minister of Finance, I cannot help but deplore the reduced allocations to Electoral Commission & the National Assembly, although our watchdog institutions, like the Office of the Auditor General and The Anti-Corruption Commission has welcomed increase in allocation. It cannot be an easy task to find the balance but it's important that these limited resources need to be managed prudently and the Auditor General needs to be strengthened and given teeth. They need ^{to} deploy Internal Auditors from the Auditor General's Office to review processes and illuminate control weaknesses and report irregular transactions. This is very important as issues of the effective utilization of budget allocated needs to be addressed.

11. The Anti-corruption Commission should also be strengthened to prevent the loss of million dollars that go unaccounted for. We cannot afford to lose millions of dollars given the level of poverty, lack of housing and other challenges. Corruption is undermining the moral fabric of our society. It is the opposite of collective efforts to build a prosperous society. It is poking holes in the Namibian House as those holes become many the house may collapse. Therefor corruption should be nipped in the butt before it becomes an endemic. For the record, world class private schools like the Windhoek Gymnasium is constructed with half the money we spent on building one rural primary school with no facilities. We lack professional contact in design and costs estimations and controls as well as maintenance of building standards, we simply don't get value for money and it's a vicious circle, and we owe it to the next generation to manage our economy prudently and not let them pay for our sins. Honourable Speaker allow me to venture in suggesting that the current level of corruption, self-gratification, looting and money laundering calls for serious ^{National} Commission of Enquiries to look into, be it Storage Facilities Project and incomplete project paid in full and excessive unauthorized expenditure. We need to take stock, take ^{additional} control and arrest the situation, we have the information no need for whistleblowing or shifting of blame. The Prime Minister said any Law is as good as its implementers, lets step up

These matters will not go away, how much more do we need to know to stop these unethical, corrupt behaviour + insider trading

looting is doing injustice and unfair to those denied benefits due to these actions

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13. The about 54% reduced in allocation to the Electoral Commission is also a source of concern. The Electoral Commission is an important institution of Governance and the consolidation of our democracy. The task of the Commission goes beyond the management of elections and includes advocacy and civic education. It will be unfortunate to say the least if the role of the Electoral Commission is affected adversely by the reduced allocation. As much as I question the justification of the 102% increase to the Attorney General's Office.

14. In conclusion, Honourable Speaker, the clarion call for "Doing more with less" is indeed an efficiency principle which is ever relevant even during brighter days not only relevant due to economic challenges or reduce revenue. I will fail in my duty if I do not compliment the Minister for reducing budget deficit and thus public debt. I am however of opinion that future budgets needs more efficient re-alignment that will be geared towards Institutional Infrastructure development verses physical infrastructure development. Meaning more money to be allocated for Research and Development for new knowledge verses bricks and mortar. *projects.* Focus on value for money, and stop the corruption and attempts to state capture. Minister of Finance you have my full support.

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