

## CONTRIBUTION TO THE MOTION ON THE STATE OF DRIVING ON OUR ROADS

Dr K. Shangula, MP

Hon Speaker  
Hon Members

I rise to render my support to the **Motion on the State of Driving on our Roads** by Hon Pendukeni Iivula-Ithana. I also support that this Motion be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee for further investigation and broader consultation. It is my belief that the search for a solution to this problem requires broader public engagement.

Hon Speaker,

In order for one to prescribe a solution, one needs to establish the diagnosis and not to treat the symptoms. More than often, we tend to apply a solution to a symptom without addressing the underlying causes. This is bound to fail as the symptoms will recur time and again. According to the Road Accident Report in Namibia of 2013, the major causes of motor vehicle accidents are reckless and drunk driving, over-speeding, driver fatigue, unsafe road, slow-moving vehicles and unsafe vehicle condition.

But the most disturbing feature on our roads is the attitude of drivers. Most of them have little patience on the road and have little regard for the pedestrians. There have been incidences of road range of which some have ended up in deaths. The major contributing factor is that there is no standardized training of drivers. Individuals go for driving lessons conducted by private drivers who are charging fees per hour. This is already a limiting factor as one is inclined to save on cost by reducing the hours of train driving. Learners are taught how to drive a car mechanically, but they are hardly taught how to conduct themselves on the road. Law enforcement agents have mostly focused on over-speeding and drunken driving and paying little or no attention to condition of the vehicles and on slow-moving vehicles. This is the root cause of the problem.

I submit that the country needs to establish a training regulatory authority whose responsibilities include standards setting for training of drivers; curriculum development for driving; civic training enforcement by the trainers; and enforcement of civilized conduct on the road by all road users.

Incessant condemnation of rogue drivers and the mourning the victims of road accidents will not solve the problem. It is the mindset of drivers that need to change! We need to instill a sense of self-regulation on the road. This can only be achieved through civic training.

In the meantime, law enforcement agencies should focus on visibility of traffic officers on the road; excessive speeding; slow-moving vehicles; and vehicle roadworthiness among others.

It may time to review the speed limit of 120 km per hour to commensurate the improved safety margins of modern vehicles. The current speed limit was set many years ago during the time of Bedford and Chevrolets. There must also be a minimum speed set for vehicles on highways to be 100 km per hour. Slow-moving vehicles on highways contribute significantly to accidents.