

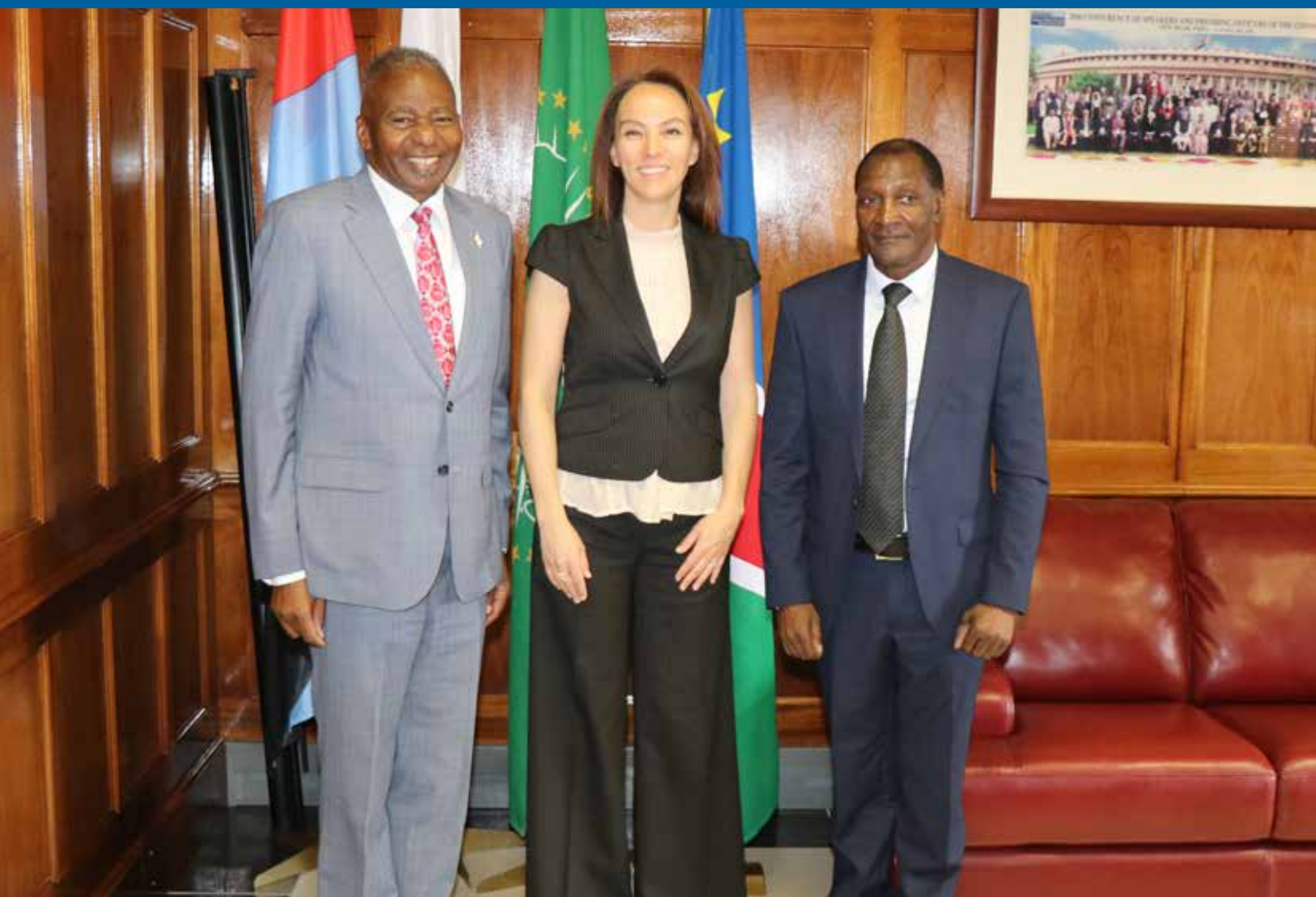


PARLIAMENT *Journal*

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Parliament Journal is a peer-reviewed distinctly informative journal published quarterly by the Parliament of Namibia. The journal publishes stories/articles of newsworthy meetings, conferences, and workshops; well researched in-depth feature articles on the Speaker and Deputy Speaker, Chamber proceedings, and oversight visits. Stories/articles about courtesy calls on presiding officers and international meetings/engagements and events such as Pan-African Parliament (PAP), Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU), Southern African Development Community Forum (SADC-PF), and Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) are also considered for publication.

Stories/articles on other important events normally fixed on the calendar of Parliament such as the official opening, State of the Nation Address (SONA), and the tabling of the national budget are also published.

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FROM EDITOR'S DESK

We welcome you once again to this edition of the Parliament Journal. This year has been unprecedented due to the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic that has wreaked havoc around the world, literally halting our daily lives. Parliament too was not spared in this difficult time as the pandemic forced the legislature to adopt other innovations such as information technology in order to perform its function of law making.

Both the State of the nation address by the Head of State, H.E. President Hage Geingob and the tabling of the national budget and the subsequent debates were held virtually for the first time in efforts aimed at reducing the number of MPs in the house to adhere to health guidelines.

Despite the threat of COVID – 19, this year has also been a special one as it was preceded by the presidential and parliamentary elections that saw the swearing in of the 7th National Assembly members. Eleven political parties are now represented in the National Assembly. Regional council elections are also due to take place in November this year. These elections would further provide Parliament (National Council) with new members.

Still in this edition we highlight the importance of research for Parliament with an article on the recent training of parliament staff by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. The latter, has been a long standing development partner of Parliament. The 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Namibian Constitution was also celebrated this year. Some of the members of the drafting committee convened at the National Assembly to reflect on this milestone occasion. We also report on the historic visit to Namibia by the Inter-Parliamentary Union President, Hon. Gabriela Cuevas Barron intended to strengthen ties. She met President Hage Geingob and the two presiding officers of Parliament, Hons. Peter Katjavivi and Bernard Sibalatani. In the next special edition that is to follow towards the end of this year, we would be exploring the origins of this publication and parliament in general.

We once again promise our readers and the public out there that we shall keep you informed about some exciting activities at Parliament and hope you will take time and enjoy reading your favorite Journal.

HEAD OF STATE DELIVERS

State of the Nation (SONA) Address

President Hage Geingob congratulated newly elected lawmakers of the 7th parliament, including re-elected Speaker, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi and his Deputy, Hon. Loide Kasingo when he addressed the nation during his state of the nation address on the 4th of June 2020.

President Geingob, was also re-elected as President for a second term during the hotly contested presidential elections in November 2019. During his address, he noted that Namibia like the rest of the world was confronted with a plethora of challenges such as the spill-over effects from the global economic crisis that was exacerbated by the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic. Namibia further experienced a protracted drought. He added that such calamities would require concerted efforts from all Namibians.

"While the past five years have been challenging as a result of the global economic downturn and protracted drought, the past four months have been particularly daunting. All of humanity has been affected by COVID - 19 and there is no doubt that survival will require a collective effort", said Geingob.

In the wake of disruptions caused by COVID-19, President Geingob sympathized with those severely affected by the crisis. He pleaded for cooperation as government metes out assistance to the most vulnerable. "Fellow Namibians, I share in your anxieties. Many of you are breadwinners and may lose or have lost your income. I understand the pain of small and large business owners. I share the concerns of learners, students and youth whose academic year has been upended by this crisis. I also share the plight of the poor and the vulnerable who face sleepless nights because of homelessness and hunger. Namibians will endure, if we stand firm in unity of purpose", assured the President.

Geingob noted that as a short measure to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the virus, government had formulated an economic and stimulus relief package amounting to 8.1 billion Namibia Dollars in order to assist formal and informal businesses especially in severely affected sectors such as tourism, hospitality, fishing, construction, SMEs, and the informal sector.

The Head of State revealed progress on some of the goals in the Harambee Prosperity Plan. He noted that the flagship programme had recorded a 70-per cent execution rate on outcomes. He reaffirmed his commitment to fighting corruption under the national anti-corruption strategy, singling out the Fishrot expose, that had resulted in the jailing of two former cabinet ministers for suspected corruption. He noted that the principle of separation of powers was sacred and that the judiciary continued to enjoy its independence in matters that were before the courts.

Other achievements in fighting corruption, according to President Geingob, included, inter alia, the cancellation of the contract to upgrade the Hosea Kutako international airport which was inflated from 3 to 7 billion Namibia Dollars, investigations into alleged irregularities in the contracts for the National Oil storage and Neckartal Dam, lifestyle audits and investigations into tax evasion and money laundering, and other cases of corruption such the SME Bank, Offshore Development Company, GIPF



President, H.E. Hage Geingob delivering SONA in the National Assembly.

Development capital portfolio, and KORA music awards.

The President noted that Namibia's improvement in good governance could be attested by its high ranking on the Ibrahim Index at number four in the continent as one of the best governed countries in Africa. He further said to add impetus to this commitment, the Whistle Blower and Witness Protection Act would be operationalized during this term.

The Head of State and the First Lady had also voluntarily declared their assets. Members of parliament and senior government officials had also done so. Reporters without borders had continued to rank Namibia at number 1 in Africa and 23rd in the world in media freedom. President had on several occasions pledged to uphold this tradition.

As part of austerity measures aimed at cutting government spending amidst difficult economic conditions, President Geingob fulfilled his promise to reduce the government structure from 25

ministries to 19. His executive had also seen an increase of 62 percent female representation. He also announced that there would be no purchasing of new government vehicle fleet during his second and last term in office.

Although Namibia remained among the most unequal societies in the world, President Geingob stated that poverty had begun to decline. He cited statistics released by the Namibia Statistics Agency that revealed that poverty had declined from 70 per cent in 1994 to over 37.7 per cent in 2003 and 18 per cent by 2016. This he said, was as a result of the many programmes government continued to implement such as social safety nets including Foster care grants for vulnerable and orphaned children, marginalized and disability grants, school feeding programme, food for work, and the veterans' grants. He says government spent over 3.9 billion Namibia Dollars on social grants per annum. Other notable programmes undertaken to alleviate

poverty included government spending of about 2.1 billion Namibia Dollars from 2015 to 2019 on drought relief and the Food Bank.

The housing programme had, somewhat, also recorded its own successes. The HHP target of 20 000 new houses had been achieved at over 80 per cent. Over 16 000 houses were delivered by March 2020. Significant progress had also been made with regard to road network and infrastructure. Consequently, Namibia was ranked as the best in Africa by the World Economic Forum. The National road network was more than 44, 500 kilometres of bitumen and gravel standards.



Members of Parliament join SONA via video conferencing as part of efforts to adhere to COVID-19 regulations.

SPEAKER OPENS

Virtual Budget Review Meeting

As is customary every year, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi, on 28 May 2020 officiated at the opening of a budget review meeting that was intended to scrutinise the responsiveness of the more than N\$72 billion national budget that was tabled by Finance minister, Iipumbu Shiimi, on 27 May 2020.

What did not seem to be customary though, was the manner in which the meeting was conducted. The meeting was opened virtually for the first time in response and compliance with the state of emergency regulations due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Speaking to participants through video conferencing and quoting the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Katjavivi noted that Parliament was not exempted from observing public health measures put in place. He added that there was a need to adapt to the new normal.

“Parliaments are currently subject to the same public health and social distancing measures as schools, places of worship or businesses. Yet in a time of crisis, the role of Parliament is more vital than ever to pass emergency laws, allocate resources, and scrutinize government action. We have had to adapt to the change”, said Katjavivi while delivering his message online.

The meeting, facilitated by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, attracted economic experts who also made their presentations virtually under the theme “National Budget 2020/21: Does it respond towards mitigating the impact of Covid 19”. Members of Parliament were equally given a chance to participate in the online meeting.

The National Assembly resumed its business with the Appropriation Bill topping its list of engagements. The first session of the 7th Parliament that begun

on the 24th of March this year was halted due to the outbreak of the pandemic.

The debate on the second reading of the Appropriation Bill was scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 31 March 2020 and on Wednesday, 1 April 2020 followed by the State of the Nation Address (SONA) on Thursday, 2 April 2020 by H E President Dr. Hage Geingob.

In continuing to adhere to state of emergency regulations, the National Assembly had further installed hand sanitizer dispensers and temperature screenings at strategic places as well as insistence on the wearing of masks. Only 50 members of Parliament were currently allowed in the chamber for the proceedings while other lawmakers used the conference rooms through teleconferencing facilities.



Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi addressing lawmakers and other participants through video conferencing when he opened the budget review virtual meeting.

NAMIBIAN CONSTITUTION

Celebrated

The 30th anniversary of the adoption of Namibia's Constitution was marked on the 9th of February 2020 under the theme "The Namibian Constitution – Thirty years on: A reflection".

Speaking at an event organized by the Office of the Ombudsman to commemorate the historic moment in Namibia's history, Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi hailed Namibia's supreme law, noting that it was inclusive and progressive. "Our Constitution is respected and appreciated at home and abroad, as one of the most forward-looking constitutions in the world. It protects the dignity and fundamental rights of all persons, including the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in peace and unity", said Katjavivi.

Katjavivi was part of the drafting committee of the Constituent Assembly. The committee represented political parties that had participated in the first free and fair elections held in November 1989, was tasked to write Namibia's Constitution. Namibia's current President, H E Hage Geingob was the Chairman of the committee. The Constitution came into force on 21st March 1990 when Namibia became independent.

The Speaker noted that as part of the commemorations, the National Assembly in partnership with Gondwana Collection, a locally based Namibian organization, invited some of the surviving members of the Constitution drafting committee to look



Some of the members of the drafting committee of the Constitution. Seated fltr, Prof Mburumba Kerina, Hon. Dirk Mudge, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi. Standing fltr, Dr. Ben Amadhila, Hon. Nahas Angula, Hon. Hartmut Ruppel, Hon. Pendukeni Iivula Ithana, Adv Vekuii Rukoro, Dr. Ngarikutuke Tjiriange, Hon. Andrew Matjila, and Hon. Willem Biwa.

back at the process that involved drafting of the Constitution and interrogate its progress. The surviving members that sat in the Constitution room at the National Assembly where the document was drafted included Hon. Dirk Mudge, Hon. Nahas Angula, Hon. Hartmut Ruppel, Hon. Ngarikutuke Tjiriange, Hon. Pendukeni Iivula-Ithana, Hon. Prof. Mburumba Kerina, Hon. Andrew Matjila, Hon. Adv Vekuii

Rukoro, Hon. Eric Biwa, and Hon. Ben Amadhila.

Hon. Katjavivi reiterated that the Constitution called for the separation of powers among the three distinct organs of the state in order to provide for checks and balances. He urged Namibian citizens to empower themselves to be able to contribute to the country's socio-economic development.



The members of the drafting committee meeting in the historic Constitution Room at the National Assembly where the Namibian Constitution was drafted.

MEMBERS OF THE 7TH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY *sworn in*

Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi and Hon. Loide Kasingo retained their positions as Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly after the house went through a secret ballot to elect the two presiding officers. Hon. Katjavivi received the most votes against UDF MP, Hon.

Dudu Murorua while Hon. Kasingo competed with PDM lawmaker, Hon. Elma Dienda. The election of Speaker and his Deputy were preceded by the swearing in of members of the 7th National Assembly.

The 96 members will serve the National Assembly for the next five years until

2025. At this point, the President was yet to announce the additional 8 non-voting members.

Accepting his election, Hon. Katjavivi called for tolerance of diverse opinions, noting that this was necessary for a democracy. "In any democracy we can always differ in opinion. However, it is significant to recognize the diverse views, listen to and appreciate the opinions of everyone but be guided by consensus, where it is possible. Diversity enriches debate and builds a strong and healthy democracy", noted Katjavivi.

Eleven parties are represented in the National Assembly. These are Swapo Party (63), UDF (2), RDP (1), RP (2), Swanu (1), APP (2), CDV (1), LPM (4), NEFF (2), NUDO (2) and PDM (16).



Members of the 7th National Assembly being sworn in.

RESEARCH IS THE BACKBONE *of Parliament*

Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi has reiterated the importance of parliamentary research, noting that it was the backbone of Parliament and an important aspect for sharpening debates and the oversight function.

Hon. Katjavivi said this when he officially opened a one-week research training workshop for parliamentary staff on 17 February 2020. The workshop, organized by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and facilitated by experts from the German Parliament, emanated from visit by Hon. Prof. Katjavivi to the German Bundestag in February last year, where cooperation agreements between the two parliaments were sealed.

According to Prof Katjavivi, improved parliamentary research had the potential to solve challenges facing the country. "We need our Parliament to deepen and strengthen its research capabilities in order to sharpen the level of debates. We believe that parliamentary debates assisted by the application of factual

information will adequately address the challenges that our nation may be facing at any given time", stated Prof Katjavivi.

The Speaker noted that in order to achieve that aspiration, parliamentary researchers should be well equipped with the necessary skills and competences. "Parliamentary researchers should be of a high level of competence so as to effectively facilitate parliamentarians to perform oversight responsibilities. We need researchers who understand research methodologies at graduate level

and who are able to discharge their duties professionally governed by ethics", said Prof Katjavivi.

He further emphasized the importance of the Parliament library in reinforcing parliament's research abilities, adding that it was a useful resource for both Houses of Parliament.

The training ended on Friday, 21 February 2020.



Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi (third from left) during the opening of the research training workshop. On the far left is Dr. Tilman Hoppe, Legal adviser (Bundestag), Andrea Kerstges, Director for research (Bundestag), Thomas Keller, Country Representative KAS, Lydia Kandetu, Secretary of the National Assembly, and Holger Scheerer, Director of Library Services (Bundestag).

PARLIAMENT VIRTUALLY CONFRONTS *Covid-19* Challenges

As the COVID-19 pandemic continued to perversely disrupt institutions around the world, the Namibian Parliament was not spared. The pandemic forced parliament, as it had done with many other institutions, to adopt innovations such as information technologies that were now largely entrenched in the workplace.

The Namibian legislature had to rapidly and stoically transform despite the heavy cost burden that came with such complex yet necessary and inescapable technologies. The Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi had recently been pleased with parliament's longstanding development partners, onboard to support the institution as it gravitated towards full ICT compliance. These partners later agreed in principle to upgrade the National Assembly and chamber conference centre and chamber into a fully-fledged virtual centre.

According to Prof Katjavivi, this was aimed at ensuring that the work of parliament continued despite challenges posed by the virus such as maintaining social distancing and the risk of infections.

Parliament measures and interventions

During a crisis such as this one, the work of parliament becomes sacrosanct as it is expected to scrutinize government decisions, authorize government expenditure by debating and passing of the appropriation bill.

The National Assembly held both meetings and sessions virtually uninterrupted for the first time in its existence. This was in response and in compliance with the state of emergency regulations that limited the number of lawmakers in the chamber. The first session of the 7th Parliament begun on the 24th of March this year but was halted due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Only 50 members were hosted inside the chamber to ensure adherence to public health regulations but also to ensure that the constitutional requirement of forming a quorum was met. Members that were not physically present in the house were connected via an online video link in separate facilities.



Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi

The tabling of the appropriation bill that led its subsequent debates as well as the state of the nation address by President Hage Geingob, were all managed through these new innovations including social media livestreaming. Motivations for various budget allocations were currently at advanced stages of approval in the National Assembly.

In continuing to adhere to the state of emergency regulations, the National Assembly had further installed hand sanitizer dispensers and temperature screenings at strategic places as well as insistence on the wearing of masks. Hon. Prof. Katjavivi stated that compliance with regulations was as equally important as the need to adapt to the new changes.

"Parliament is currently subject to the same public health and social distancing measures as schools, places of worship or businesses. We need to adhere to the rules. Our role is more vital than ever as we are mandated to pass emergency laws, allocate resources, and scrutinize government action. We have to adapt to the changes", said Hon. Prof. Katjavivi.

Future of parliament engagements post COVID-19

According to Hon. Prof. Katjavivi, who was an ardent proponent of e-parliament, the pandemic had acted as a catalyst for re-inventing the future and had helped fast track his long-held dream of transforming the Namibian parliament into a paperless institution.

"Notwithstanding this pandemic, ICT comes with infinite opportunities that should be exploited by parliament in its quest to extensively engage the electorate. This crisis has forced us to fast track the realization of the e-parliament concept. This will help improve information access and dissemination as well as empowering lawmakers post COVID-19", stated the Speaker.

In order to boost its newly introduced livestreaming services on social media platforms, plans were afoot to expand such services to multiple online spaces including the parliament website with options for indigenous language translations whose audios could be shared with radio stations for further transmission to the electorate in the near future. The latter was in keeping with the parliament mantra of inclusivity and taking its services to the grassroots level. The parliament Facebook page alone, on average, had become popular and reached over 70 000 users daily since the resumption of sittings and livestreams. This was a stark contrast to negligible numbers of below 1 000 users previously.

Hon. Prof. Katjavivi recently revealed that the Chinese government had agreed in principle to upgrade the biggest conference hall at the National Assembly and the chamber into fully-fledged virtual centres. The conference hall was refurbished in 2019 following discussions between Speaker Katjavivi and his Chinese counterpart, Li Zhanshu after the latter's visit to the Namibian Parliament. He noted that the facility would transform the business of parliament even after the end of the pandemic. "We want to upgrade it into a fully-fledged virtual centre with video conferencing facility. It will serve as a point of reference to transform the Namibian parliament to become flexible

to be fully utilized as a virtual centre, post COVID-19 pandemic so as to facilitate parliament to continue to meet virtually", said Hon. Prof. Katjavivi.

Currently, the online facilities were leased from a local ICT company for the period of the budget debate.

He further suggested that under the new normal, there was a need for reskilling in order to facilitate workforce optimization. "We would like our staff to be trained on various applications, including language translation of the already installed conferencing system as well as compatibility of video transmission in the facility during virtual meetings", noted the Speaker.



Members of Parliament who were not physically present in chamber were connected virtually during the presentation of the national budget recently.

GERMAN BUNDESRAT PRESIDENT *visits National Assembly*

A German delegation led by the President of the German Bundesrat who was also the Minister of Land, Hon. Daniel Gunther visited the National Assembly on 15 July 2019.

The German Bundesrat is a legislative body that represents the 16 federal states of Germany at the national level.

During the visit, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Loide Kasingo reiterated that the Namibian Parliament needed assistance to strengthen its committee system and parliamentary research services.

"We have 10 portfolio committees at the moment and their function is to do oversight. When our Speaker visited the German Parliament, he requested that we be assisted to strengthen our committee system. A report to that effect has been tabled and we will be looking at it when we resume our session", noted Kasingo.

Hon. Kasingo noted that although Namibia had achieved over 48% women representation in Parliament, a lot still needed to be done to progress even further. She further urged opposition parties to emulate the zebra style policy adopted by the ruling party for the latter to be realized.

"We have the 48% women representation mainly because of the zebra style policy of the ruling party. We are trying to convince our opposition parties to follow suit so that we match Rwanda that has over 60% representation", said Hon. Kasingo.

Hon. Gunther on his part noted that the German Parliament still lagged behind in terms of women representation and further commended Namibia for being a good example.



Hon. Loide Kasingo, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly (right) exchanging gifts with Hon. Daniel Gunther (left), the President of the German Bundesrat.

BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER

pays a courtesy call on the Speaker

British High Commissioner to Namibia, Her Excellency, Kate Airey paid a courtesy call on the Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi on 07 February 2019 to discuss a wide range of issues, among them the implication of BREXIT for Commonwealth countries after Britain leaves the European Union.

The two were of the opinion that Commonwealth countries could have a strategy in place in order to emerge stronger post BREXIT.

Hon. Prof. Katjavivi further implored the British High Commissioner to relook at the terms of reference for the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, a charitable organization meant to enrich the lives of citizens across the Commonwealth. Namibia's classification as an upper middle income country often disadvantaged the country from funding programmes.

He however commended parliamentary cooperation that existed between the two legislatures. "We have a vibrant relationship and the British Parliament has been involved in a training programme for our MPs through CPA. They will once again be arriving on the 8th of April for another training", noted the Speaker.

The Speaker was further concerned about the looming power crisis in the



British High Commissioner to Namibia, Her Excellency, Kate Airey (left) with the Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi.

country noting that there was an urgent need to look at alternatives such as the Kudu gas project and solar energy if the country aspired to be energy self-sufficient. He noted that Parliament would

soon play its part by holding consultations with stakeholders in the energy sector to find a lasting solution to the energy crisis. ■



Speaker Katjavivi engaging with the British High Commissioner.

SPEAKER SEEKS PARTNERSHIP *in Implementing SDGs*

Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi appealed for German expertise for parliament to successfully meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs.)

Hon. Prof. Katjavivi made the appeal on 29th August 2019 when he met the German Federal Minister of Economic Cooperation and Development, Hon. Gerd Müller who was visiting Namibia. The Speaker noted that SDGs implementation formed part of the mandate of parliament through its oversight function. "It is our duty to make sure that these goals are achieved by working in a collaborative manner with government agencies in a systematic way and through our oversight function. We would want both our MPs and staff to play their part. This is the reason why we would like you to share your expertise in achieving this", implored Hon. Prof. Katjavivi.

It became apparent during the meeting that arrangements were already

underway for the German government to assist in this regard.

The SDGs that replaced the Millennium Development goals (MDGs) in 2015, had targets that were aimed at ending poverty, inequality, injustice, and tackling climate change among many others.

The goals were important in achieving social justice and ensuring the welfare and improved living standards of the world citizens.

Hon. Prof. Katjavivi further noted that the German Parliament had already committed to assist the Namibian legislature through capacity building. "We have already signed an MoU highlighting things we can do together. The German Parliament has opened doors for young Namibians to do internship programmes. It has also committed itself to capacitate our research division including the usage of ICT so that we become a paperless institution", noted the Speaker.

He mentioned the recently concluded children's parliament as one of the achievements of the Namibian parliament. "We had over 90 learners from all the regions coming here as members of parliament and debating important issues related to their wellbeing. The purpose of this exercise was to inculcate the values of democracy in our young people", noted Katjavivi.

Hon. Muller concurred with the Speaker adding that Namibia was seen as a model for other countries. He further stated that it was important for both countries to resolve the genocide issue. "I hope we can come to a conclusion regarding the negotiations. This is a history we cannot ignore but we need to find a lasting solution", said Muller. Hon. Prof. Katjavivi shared similar sentiments noting that healing the wounds of the past would open up more opportunities for both countries.



Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi (right) exchanging gifts with the German Federal Minister of Economic Cooperation and Development, Hon. Gerd Muller.

SEXUAL REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS PROJECT

launched by the Speaker

Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi is hopeful that the second phase of the Sexual Reproductive Health Rights, HIV and AIDS Governance project will replicate the successes of its predecessor. Hon. Prof. Katjavivi shared these sentiments when he officially launched the second phase of the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF) initiated project that would run for a period of four years from 2019 to 2022.

The project funded by the Swedish government to the tune of USD3.2 million culminated from a resolution during a plenary assembly of the SADC-PF in 2007, in Malawi that bound Parliaments to address SRHR issues at both national and regional levels. The project sought to sensitise individuals on choices regarding their sexuality and reproductive health rights despite their age, gender or HIV status. At the legislative level, the aim was to introduce motions and scrutinise bills in Parliament that sought to address issues of sexual reproductive health rights. Reports emanating from investigative visits had already been tabled in Parliament for discussions and further action.

The project would be implemented in 14 SADC countries including Namibia that had continued to grapple with sexual reproductive health rights challenges with mostly women and girls at the receiving end.

Key Parliamentary Committees identified to champion these issues included the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Gender, Social Development and Family affairs and the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resources and Community Development.

Previously, Namibian Members of Parliament visited various regions in Namibia to ascertain the condition of state health facilities and look at issues of reproductive health including HIV and AIDS in general. This was done in partnership with the expertise of Civil Society Organisations.

Challenges uncovered at the time included poor accessibility to health facilities, lack of health personnel, lack of and poor health infrastructure, poverty, high teenage pregnancy, gender based violence, and discrimination of key populations among many others. The latter included men who had sex

with other men, transgender people, sex workers, prisoners and people who injected drugs who were mostly cut off from mainstream health services and were at high risk of contracting HIV than the ordinary population.

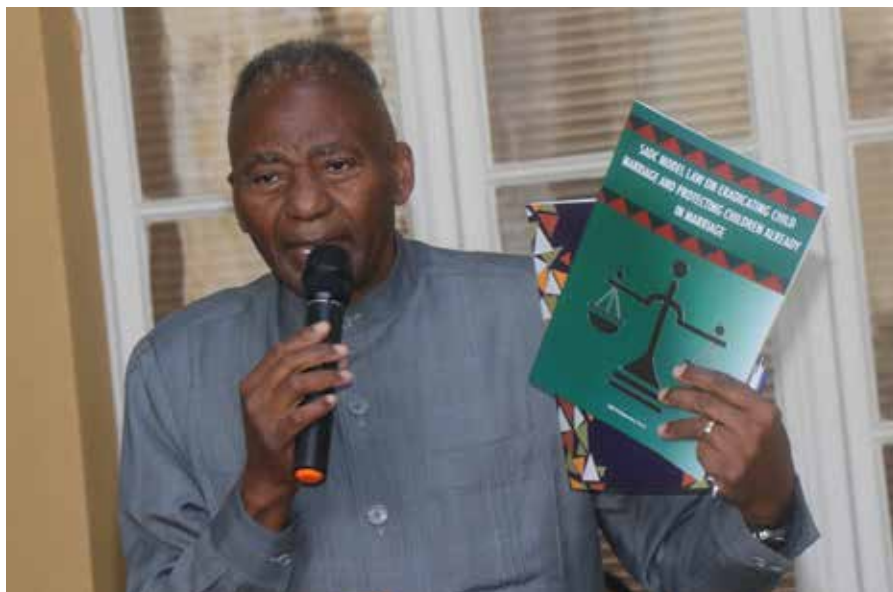
According to Hon. Prof. Katjavivi, the first phase of the project that started in 2014 and concluded in 2018 recorded many successes for Namibia. This, despite the country having only joined the project towards the end of 2016.

"The project during its first phase enabled parliamentarians to hold government to account on key SRHR issues such as interrogation of comprehensive sexuality education programmes and the implementation of interventions to prevent early and unintended pregnancies and child marriage as well as policies for the protection of key populations", noted the Speaker.

Hon. Prof. Katjavivi stated that the second phase was anchored on five key thematic areas that included sexual gender based violence and gender inequality, early and unintended pregnancy and safe abortions, commodity security and universal health coverage, comprehensive sexuality education, and non-discrimination and protection of key populations.

The Speaker implored fellow lawmakers to advance the interests of the less privileged by influencing the enactment of legislation that promoted inclusion. "As lawmakers, we are in a better position to influence and advocate for laws best suited to the needs and aspirations of our people. Laws that impact on economic and social development should be placed high on the agenda", noted Katjavivi.

Deputy Chairperson of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Gender Equality, Social Development and Family Affairs, Hon. Gotthard Kasuto echoed similar sentiments noting that the success of the project depended on the commitment of all stakeholders.



Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi launching the SRHR Project at the National Assembly.

AWARD OF CERTIFICATES TO PARTICIPANTS

by the Research Training Workshop

Parliamentary staff who participated in the research training sponsored by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and facilitated by German experts from the Bundestag (German Parliament) hailed the initiative and were recently awarded certificates after completing the intensive exercise that covered a myriad of lessons including researching for parliamentary work and bill summaries.

Research is an important pillar in any Parliament setting as it provides background knowledge to lawmakers including parliamentary standing committees that conduct oversight functions. Research further has the potential to increase the quality of parliamentary debates and scrutiny of legislation. It offers rigorous evidence necessary for public decision making and policy formulation. The Namibian Parliament has 104 members in the National Assembly (lower house) while, National Council (upper house), has 42 lawmakers.

The training programme, the brain child of Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi was held from 17th-21th February 2020. It emanated from a visit by Hon. Prof. Katjavivi to the German Bundestag in February last year, where cooperation agreements between the two parliaments were sealed.

According to Katjavivi, more training programmes were envisaged. "We are thankful to KAS for having facilitated the training. We have identified a core team of researchers from both houses of Parliament who were trained. A follow-up in-house training will also be conducted followed by a more advanced training at the German Parliament later this year", noted Katjavivi.

The Speaker noted that Parliament was aware of challenges such as lack of research staff and the necessary infrastructure adding that mechanisms were being put in place to find a lasting solution. "In the interim while still reviewing our structures, we have identified a core team of researchers within the existing staff. These are dedicated staff that will help our lawmakers with research. We just have to put in place the right infrastructure for this work to improve and expand. We also have plans to boost our library as a point of reference" stated Katjavivi.

One of the participating staff members, Belinda Karuaera, a Chief policy analyst at the National Assembly stated that the training was enlightening for her and had greatly improved her skills. "I learnt how to collect information from various search engines diligently and how to draft research briefs and bill summaries. We also had an opportunity to learn

how the German Bundestag Research Department operates and that would aid us in our quest to establish our own fully functional Research Department", said Karuaera.

Chief researcher at the National Council, Nico Sisinyize had similar sentiments adding that there was a need for more follow up trainings. "Everything went well. We would however like to have more of these trainings in order to continuously empower ourselves as researchers and provide the necessary service to our lawmakers", stated Sisinyize.



Chief researcher at the National Council, Nico Sisinyize receiving his certificate.



Belinda Karuaera, one of participating staff member at National Assembly receiving her certificate.



Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi (centre, seated) poses for a group photo with parliament, KAS staff, and German experts from the Bundestag at the end of the research training workshop. On the right (seated) is Thomas Keller, Country Representative KAS. The five-day training workshop was facilitated by experts from the German Parliament and sponsored by KAS.

FRENCH LAWMAKERS COMMEND NAMIBIA'S *Biodiversity Conservation*

A French member of Parliament, Guillaume Chevrollier has praised Namibia's Community-based Natural Resource Management Programme (CBNRM) for promoting sustainable growth. Chevrollier who is also president of the Parliament friendship group between France and Southern Africa was part of a delegation of two French lawmakers that included Rachel Mazuir, who visited the Namibian Parliament to look at issues related to climate change such as agriculture, renewable energy, and biodiversity.

Many rural people in Namibia had been lifted out of poverty through biodiversity conservation. In 1996 the government of Namibia amended the nature conservation ordinance to allow for rural communities to set up and register conservancies for the purpose of sustainable use of natural resources outside national parks through what is known as Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM). Over N\$90 million is generated annually through conservancies.

He commended Namibia's management of its natural resources when he met the Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi on 25 September 2019. The French lawmaker stated that it was fascinating how Namibia had managed to elevate efforts to promote sustainable use of natural resources and coexistence between the environment and the community.

"We are very impressed with the management of conservancies and how it is benefiting communities. It is creating jobs and income for many people and in the process creating development and growth sustainably", noted Chevrollier.

The lawmaker also proposed the creation of a French Namibia Parliamentary friendship group to look at issues of climate change more holistically.

Hon. Prof. Katjavivi was in agreement that Namibia's flagship conservation programme had benefited both the environment and communities but cautioned that climate change had the potential to reverse the gains if mitigation measures were not hurriedly

put in place. "If climate change is not properly addressed it may disrupt our achievements and the implementation of sustainable development goals. It is important that as Parliament we work together to have mitigating measures that would have desirable results", noted Hon. Prof. Katjavivi.

The Speaker who appealed for French partnership and expertise, further noted that issues of climate change required collaborative efforts. "As a member of the Inter Parliamentary Union, climate change is an important issue in Namibia, more so because we are an arid country. We congratulate France for championing climate change at a high level. We would love to tackle these issues through our parliamentary committees and we would very much love to partner with the French Parliament and see how we can manage this situation", said Hon. Prof. Katjavivi. The two lawmakers also visited the Chairperson of the National Council, Margaret Mensah Williams.



Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi (middle) with French lawmakers, Hon. Guillaume Chevrollier (left) and Hon. Rachel Mazuir (right) who both belong to the France-Southern Africa parliamentary friendship group who visited the Namibian Parliament. France Ambassador to Namibia, Claire Bodonyi is on the extreme left.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY'S SECRETARY ELECTED

Vice-President of the Association of Secretary-General of African Parliaments



Secretary to the National Assembly, Lydia Kandetu.

At a meeting of the Executive Committee, the National Assembly Secretary, Lydia Kandetu was elected as the Vice President of the Association of Secretary-General of African Parliaments (ASGAP). The association held its first meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, on the 5th of August 2019, at the Pan-African Parliament (PAP).

The position runs for three (3) years. If Kandetu resigned or retired before that period, Namibia would

lose the position and the next Secretary would automatically replace her.

Some of the objectives of the Association of Secretary-General of African Parliaments entailed promoting the establishment of mechanisms to accelerate the ratification, domestication, and implementation of AU instruments at regional and national levels while also promoting and encouraging the establishment of focal points within Parliaments to

ensure, inter alia, the visibility of the Pan-African Parliament and effective cooperation between African Parliaments.

ASGAP facilitates professional contact among its members and supports effective participation of Members of PAP and Regional and National Parliaments in achieving the objectives of PAP.

SPEAKER MEETS

EU Ambassador designate

Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi says the Namibian Parliament considers the European Union (EU) as an important strategic partner. Hon. Prof. Katjavivi mentioned this when he met the EU Ambassador Designate, H E Sinikka Antila on 20th September 2019.

The Speaker noted that many projects funded by the EU that aimed to develop the capacity of Parliament had taken place. He stated that he was looking forward to more similar projects - such as the envisaged "Enhancing Participatory Democracy in Namibia" (EPDN) programme that would target both civil society organisations and members of Parliament.

"The Enhancing Participatory Democracy in Namibia (EPDN) will open up and strengthen greater avenues for Parliament to engage with the civil society. Furthermore, it will contribute towards strengthening MPs in making appropriate laws for the country. We have also exciting projects such as the just concluded Children's Parliament that seeks to inculcate democratic values in our young people", said Hon. Prof. Katjavivi.

The Speaker further reminded the ambassador designated diplomat about capacity development adding that the Namibian Parliament needed to boost its ICT infrastructure, research capacity, budgeting and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implementation efforts.

"As you may have gathered, we sounded your predecessor and the team at the EU for possible technical assistance in terms of installation of effective WIFI on our premises and equipping the research facility for MPs as well as training support in the shift towards e-parliament. We would also like to be able to be at the forefront of budget formulation in collaboration with the ministry of finance, particularly gender sensitive budgeting and ensure the implementation of SDGs", noted Hon. Prof. Katjavivi.

The speaker noted that already parliaments of two EU countries, namely Germany and Finland had committed to assist the Namibian legislature with ICT development.

Ambassador Antila who was particularly impressed with the Children's Parliament, praised Namibia's democratic values

noting that the EU was looking forward to collaborating with both Parliament and civil society. "The EPDN is a flagship programme of the EU and it is important that we work together with civil society organisations and Parliament." She noted that although Namibia was classified as an upper middle income country, it could still benefit from various EU funding initiatives.



Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi (right) with EU Ambassador designate, H E Sinikka Antila (left).

IPU PRESIDENT HAPPY

with Namibia's active involvement in IPU affairs

The President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Gabriela Cuevas Barron was in Namibia for a four-day visit that was aimed to strengthen relations with IPU Member countries and discuss initiatives the world's parliamentary body had undertaken in the region.

In a joint meeting with the presiding officers of the Namibian parliament, Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi and Chairman of the National Council, Bernard Sibalatani, Barron praised Namibia for being an active member of the IPU as shown through its involvement in many of the body's programmes and activities. She bemoaned the slow pace at which member countries of the IPU implemented the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This revealed that only 14% of member parliaments addressed SDG issues to a certain extent.

She suggested that parliaments be capacitated on a national level through exchange programmes in order to share knowledge and skills given the lack of funding that currently engulfed her organization. She further urged for a review of laws to make them more inclusive in order to ease the oversight function of parliaments.

Barron said this, in response to Hon. Prof. Katjavivi who had earlier requested for IPU expertise in evaluation and monitoring of SDGs and streamlining of the work of parliamentary committees. Speaker had also implored for inclusion of the UN think tank in the activities of IPU and by extension, member countries.

In the same vein, Sibalatani amplified the appeal by noting that both members of Parliament and staff needed to be capacitated and that Namibia's notable achievement on gender parity in the legislature could be sustained with the support of the IPU.

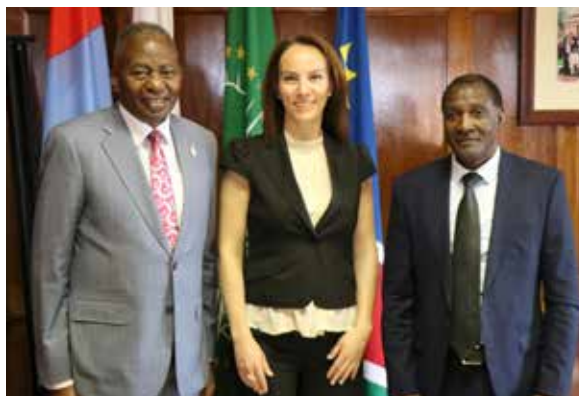
At a meeting that followed with the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, Minister Doreen Sioka concurred that Namibia had achieved a lot in terms of gender parity, particularly in politics, noting that an amendment to the electoral law could serve as the final solution to sustain gender equality. She reiterated her concern regarding escalating cases of gender-based violence and requested the IPU to help in finding a long lasting solution to the scourge.

Executive Director in the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, Wilhencia Uiras added that there was a need to strengthen not only gender-responsive budgeting but that the gender lens should also apply to the drafting and review of legislation.

Barron laid wreaths at the heroes' acre to pay tribute to Namibia's fallen heroes and heroines - at the graves of the late Speakers of the National Assembly, Mose Tjitendero and Theo-Ben Gurirab.

The Mexican lawmaker, who was elected in October 2017 with overwhelming support from the African geopolitical group, was further expected to meet with the Head of State, President Hage Geingob. Baron who was also the youngest MP to hold that position since the organisation's formation also praised Namibia's democracy.

Namibia joined the IPU shortly after independence in



Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi (left) and Chairperson of the National Council Bernard Sibalatani (right) with the President of the IPU, Mexican lawmaker, Gabriela Cuevas who was on a four-day visit of Namibia.

1990 and has been actively involved in the work of the organization through annual meetings and other activities. The 99th session of the IPU Assembly was hosted in Namibia in 1998 and the late former Namibian Speaker, Dr. Theo Ben-Gurirab once served as the body's President from 2008 to 2011.

Hon. Prof. Katjavivi formed part of the executive in the committee on United Nations Affairs that connected parliaments with UN activities and goals. Former chairperson of the National Council, Margaret Mensah Williams also served the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians for two consecutive terms as its President until 2018.

Namibian MPs have contributed in several debates and resolutions, the latest being an emergency resolution at the 140th IPU Assembly in Doha, Qatar that called for urgent action to support people of the countries of Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe that had been devastated by Cyclone Idai and the lifting of Namibia's blacklisting with several other countries as tax havens by the European Union.

The IPU that was founded in 1889 and had been in existence for more than 130 years, is a global organization of parliaments that brought together parliamentarians to identify international challenges and make recommendations for action.



The three presiding officers and parliamentary staff during their interaction.

HUNGARY READY TO *assist Namibia*

Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament, Hon. László Kövér said Namibia belonged to the country's long-standing friends and that the country had started to heighten that friendship through its policy of opening to the South strategy which entailed increasing its economic ties with the African continent and Latin America. Hon. Kövér said this when he hosted his counterpart, Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi in Budapest, Hungary on the 21st October 2019. Hon. Prof. Katjavivi was on a three-day reciprocal visit of the Hungarian legislature to strengthen cooperation in the work of Parliament and the implementation of sustainable development goals.

He held a series of meetings with Hungary's political leadership including the Hungary Sub-Saharan parliamentary friendship group.

The Namibia – Hungary friendship dates back to the time of Namibia's struggle for independence. Diplomatic relations were formally established shortly after Namibia attained its independence.

The Hungarian Speaker noted that Hungary valued its friendship with Namibia and praised the country's democracy adding that it had continued to serve as a beacon of hope in the world. "We consider Sub-Saharan Africa and Namibia, in particular, as a strategic partner. Our friendship comes a long way. We see Namibia as a model of democratic transition and it is on this basis that we continue to cement our relations", said Hon. Kövér.

He further noted that Hungary had continued to fund Namibian students through a scholarship programme that was intended to equip the youth with the necessary skills needed to develop the country. The Speaker was however disappointed by the shortage of students making use of those study opportunities. "Hungary considers the scholarship programme for Namibian youth to be a priority. Apart from many Namibian students studying in Hungary on tuition basis, we also have a scholarship programme for Namibian students. It funds 10 students annually but unfortunately, this year we were not able to get enough students to fill up those places. Perhaps we need to find out why this low intake", stated Hon. Kövér.



Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi (right) with his Hungarian counterpart, Hon. László Kövér.

Hon. Katjavivi noted during the meeting with his counterpart that Namibia was pleased with the friendship that existed and that more efforts were needed by both countries to elevate the existing relations. He stated that Namibia had moved in that direction with its visa liberalization efforts that included Hungary. "We would not only want Parliament cooperation but also in other sectors. We would also want Hungary that has vast experience, to assist us in the implementation of SDGs and how we can align our goals to that effect. Hungary is one of countries we would want to exempt for visa requirement. It is the first step and I hope in future we can completely do away with the visa regime. It is important also that we fully utilize the study opportunities presented to us by Hungary", said Hon. Katjavivi.

The Hungarian Deputy Prime Minister, Hon. Zsolt Semjén who was also pleased with visa liberalization, assured Hon. Prof. Katjavivi during a separate meeting that Hungary was ready to assist Namibia in any area of mutual interest. He noted that Hungary has vast expertise in agriculture and water management. This, after Katjavivi had revealed the devastation caused by drought in Namibia due to climate change. Semjén further noted that visa liberalisation could increase the number of Hungarian visitors and this would boost Namibia's tourism potential.

"We could look at the areas of agriculture and water management. Hunting is also one of the major sources of income in Hungary. Many tourists go to Namibia and Botswana for hunting. The visa liberalization will go a long way in boosting tourism. It would be nice, if there's progress in this regard. Hungary



Speaker Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi (left) with the Hungarian Deputy Prime Minister Hon. Zsolt Semjén.

is known in the world as a leader in water management, particularly water recycling", said Hon. Semjén.

The Hungarian Deputy premier further praised Namibia's nature conservation programme. He said it was exemplary and had promoted co-existence with wildlife before extending an invitation for Namibia to participate in the upcoming 2021 "One with nature" world of hunting and nature exhibition to be held in Budapest.

The Hungarian Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Hon. Levente Magyar further promised to persuade Hungarian companies to invest in Namibia through the envisaged ambitious government investment programme which is intended to encourage local companies to invest in Africa. "We would love to see Hungarian companies going to Namibia. Through our financial programme, we will be giving non-refundable financial assistance to companies up to 50% of total investment value to invest in Africa. I will personally make sure that some of these companies look for opportunities in Namibia. We need to involve government agencies of the two countries to realise this. We are ready to do that", assured Hon. Magyar. ■



Speaker Hon. Prof. Katjavivi signing the guest book after visiting the Hungarian legislature.

FAO HOLDS AWARENESS WORKSHOP *on VGGTs for MPs and relevant Government officials*

Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) conducted a three-day workshop on capacity development of Namibian Parliamentarians on the voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of land tenure, fisheries and forests in the context of national food security (VGGT).

The three-day workshop that took place on the 11th of June 2019 was aimed at evaluating voluntary guidelines which sought to improve governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests.

According to FAO's Country Representative to Namibia, Farayi Zimudzi, VGGTs are an international instrument that could be used by many different actors to improve the governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests. Zimudzi stressed that VGGTs served as a reference and set out principles and internationally accepted standards for the practices of responsible governance of tenure.

Zimudzi mentioned some of the areas that VGGTs could contribute to and guide member states such as Namibia, some of these being laws, policies and strategies, securing full rights to land for small scale farmers and defending and regaining the territories of indigenous peoples and securing access to and control over fishing zones (including coastal land) and ecosystems for fishing communities.



Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Loide Kasingo seated alongside FAO's Officials.

"While the guidelines place primary responsibility of their application on governments, relevant stakeholders can also use this international instrument to assert the tenure rights of their constituents such as communities, indigenous groups, or other marginalized populations," said Zimudzi who also noted that the VGGTs were voluntary and therefore did not legally bind, that is, they did not replace existing national laws, international laws, commitments, treaties or agreements.

Zimudzi emphasised that VGGTs encompassed the principles of human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

VGGTs are the first global agreement on governance of tenure reached by consensus in May 2012 by the World Committee on Food Security (CFS) after its development through an inclusive process of regional consultations held from 2009-2010 in Brazil, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Jordan, Namibia, Panama, Romania, the Russian Federation, Samoa and Vietnam.

In her opening remarks, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Loide Kasingo underlined that the VGGTs or Guidelines provided a framework that Namibia could use when developing own strategies, policies, legislation, programmes and activities pertaining to land tenure governance.

"The Guidelines promote responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests, with respect to all forms of tenure: public, private, communal, indigenous, customary and informal," noted Hon. Kasingo while also stressing that the guidelines were also intended to contribute to achieving sustainable livelihoods, social stability, housing security, rural development, environmental protection, and sustainable social and economic development. Hon. Kasingo pointed out that the guidelines allowed governments, civil society, the private sector and citizens to judge whether any proposed actions and the actions of others constituted acceptable practices pertaining to land tenure governance.

"These Guidelines could facilitate our nation in sustainable governance of land," said Hon. Kasingo.

FAO supported the Government of the Republic of Namibia to address areas within the Country Programming Framework such as Strengthened



FAO's Country Representative, Ms Farayi Zimudzi.

policy, legal, strategic and institutional frameworks for agriculture, fisheries, forestry, food security and nutrition. In addition, FAO supported agricultural production, productivity, food safety and strengthened nutrition sensitive value chains and strengthened capacity for natural resource management and land governance while also strengthening capacity for disaster risk reduction, resilience building and climate change adaptation and mitigation.



Some of the MPs and FAO officials who attended the workshop.

KATJAVIVI IMPLORES IPU MEMBERS

to strengthen peace

Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi says Namibia has been relentlessly promoting peace and security. With Namibia having endured the bitter and protracted struggle for independence, Hon. Prof. Katjavivi notes that the country attaches great importance to international diplomacy and intervention to resolve conflicts.

He made the remarks at the 141st IPU Assembly where he participated in a debate entitled “Strengthening international law: Parliamentary roles and mechanisms and the contribution of regional cooperation”.

Katjavivi noted that Namibia was, a product of international solidarity and that it had progressed into one of Africa’s success stories. “Namibia obtained her independence in 1990 after many years of a bloody conflict, thanks to the will of our people and the intervention of the United Nations, through Resolution 435 of the UN Security Council, which paved the way for our independence. We in Namibia know very well what war can do to people as well as the importance of international intervention. Namibia today is regarded as one of the success stories of the United Nations”, noted Katjavivi.

To complement what had already been achieved in international law and order, Hon. Prof. Katjavivi was quick to point out that the Namibian Parliament had ratified

a number of international conventions such as the African Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, Chemical Weapons Convention, Genocide Convention, Terrorism Financing and Terrorism Bombing Convention. With the mandate to monitor and hold the executive to account, the Speaker further noted that the Namibian Parliament had continued to exercise oversight including that of scrutinising progress on the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

He said the Namibian Parliament that practised participatory democracy, was an active member of continental and regional legislative bodies intended to promote cooperation, unity, peace, and democracy. “The Namibian Parliament provides a platform for citizens to engage in peaceful demonstrations while submitting petitions on issues of importance. The public is at liberty to visit individual MPs to discuss pertinent issues as well as familiarise themselves with the functions of Parliament. Namibia is also one the few countries in the world hosting the Children’s Parliament that inculcates a democratic culture among young people”, said Katjavivi.

He drummed up support for the people of both Western Sahara and Palestine. “I would like to make a special plea to all of us in this hall to listen to the people of Western Sahara and Palestine. This is in



Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi presenting his statement during the debate.

terms of implementing key UN resolutions on the question of self-determination for both of these people”, pleaded Hon. Prof. Katjavivi.

The IPU is a global organisation of parliaments that brings together lawmakers to identify international challenges and make recommendations for action. Fellow lawmakers Margaret Mensah Williams, Chairperson of the National Council, Elma Dienda, Dawid Boois and Heather Sibungo accompanied the Speaker.

NAMIBIA AND VIETNAM

explore ways of strengthening long-standing fraternal relations

A delegation of the Communist Party of Vietnam under the leadership of H.E. Nguyen Hai Ninh paid a courtesy call on the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security on the 16th of October 2019.

Namibia and Vietnam established diplomatic relations soon after independence in 1990.

The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security is tasked to conduct parliamentary oversight of the programmes and activities of the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Safety and Security, Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration, Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation, Department of Veterans' Affairs and the activities of the Namibian Central Intelligence Service.

During the meeting, the Committee and the Vietnamese delegation engaged on areas of cooperation in the sectors of Information and Technology, Agriculture and Tourism and agreed to strengthen and enhance the long-standing fraternal relations.

"Namibia was always supported by the Vietnamese people in their struggle for independence, freedom and national unification, as well as in the current cause of national reconstruction and



The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security during a meeting with their Vietnamese counterparts.

defence," stressed Hon. Leevi Katoma, Chairperson of the Committee. Likewise, Vietnam rendered support and assistance to the Namibian people through SWAPO during the struggle for freedom and independence of Namibia.

In March/April 2015, the 132nd IPU Assembly was conducted in Hanoi, Vietnam. At that Assembly, parliaments around the world adopted the Hanoi

Declaration of Sustainable Development Goals. The Assembly also discussed and adopted other international agenda items such as Cyber Warfare.

Namibia and Vietnam lastly signed some agreements between October 2002 and November 2003, but in 2007 the Namibian Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources approached Vietnam with respect to aquaculture development in Namibia. This culminated into negotiations at official level and together with the assistance of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) the Ministry began formulating an action plan



The delegation of the Communist Party of Vietnam.



HE Nguyen Hai Ninh presents a gift to Hon Levi Katoma of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security



The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security with their Vietnamese counterparts.

to develop aquaculture in cooperation with Vietnam.

The Vietnamese expressed interest in possibly exporting Namibian beef, indicating it to be one of the best in the world. "Apart from your tasty beef, we do believe Namibia has favourable trade conditions and we look forward to

importing your beef to Vietnam in the near future."

The Committee has the responsibility and duty to exercise an overall oversight function with regard to Namibia's foreign policy and its relations with other states on matters of defence and security.

The Committee expressed the need to establish bilateral and friendly relations between the two Parliaments in order to conduct their parliamentary duties more efficiently and effectively.

SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY LAUNCHES *refurbished Conference Hall and Parliamentary Outreach Bus*

Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi launched a revamped conference hall and a parliamentary outreach bus recently. The two items were made possible by the government of China following discussions between Speaker Katjavivi and his Chinese counterpart, Hon. Li Zhanshu who visited the Namibian Parliament.

Katjavivi noted that the parliament bus replete with ICT facilities, would strengthen the programme of taking parliament to the people. He thanked the government of China for the support.



Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi (left) with the Chinese Ambassador to Namibia, H E Zhang Yiming (right) at the launch of the refurbished conference hall and Parliament bus.



Speaker Katjavivi and Ambassador, Zhang Yiming unveil the Parliamentary bus.

PARLIAMENT EXPLORES AREAS *of cooperation with Russia*

The two presiding officers of the Namibian Parliament, Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi and Chairperson of the National Council, Hon. Bernard Sibalatani praised the long-standing relations between Namibia and Russia, further adding that inter parliamentary cooperation had the potential to improve the work of the legislature. They said this during a joint meeting with the visiting Chairperson of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, Hon. Valentina Matviyenko.

Hon. Matviyenko visited the country on invitation by National Council to explore parliament to parliament relations and cooperation in other areas of mutual interest between the two countries.

Hon. Prof. Katjavivi noted that Namibia and Russia relations dated back to the time of Namibia's struggle for freedom adding that Russia had continued its support to Namibia post-independence. "Russia and its people have been with us even during the difficult time when we were fighting for our independence. They continued and continue to train our professionals in the various fields. It is on this basis that we should deepen our long- standing relations", stated Hon. Prof. Katjavivi.

The Speaker suggested that the two parliaments explore possible areas of cooperation, singling out exchange visits

and the monitoring and evaluation of sustainable development goals (SDGs). "The two parliaments should work together to identify areas that should constitute our linkage. We should strengthen our networking as members of the IPU and share experiences with regard to the monitoring and evaluation of SDGs", implored Hon. Prof. Katjavivi.

Chairperson of the National Council, Hon. Bernad Sibalatani, shared similar sentiments noting that capacity building endeavours such as exchange programmes between the two legislatures, would improve the work of the Namibian Parliament given Russia's vast experience. "Indeed, the Russia Federation has been our friend through the hardest of times during our liberation struggle. We would like to share experiences in terms of service delivery and the involvement of local communities in socio-economic and political issues. This would improve law making", said Sibalatani.

Hon. Matviyenko acknowledged the importance of cooperation between the two parliaments hinting that the two parliaments were looking at the possibility of signing memoranda of understanding in order to lay down the legal foundation for the envisaged cooperation. She further noted that a previous meeting between the Namibian President, H.E. Hage Geingob and his Russian counterpart,



Hon. Valentina Matviyenko meeting President Hage Geingob at state house.

Vladimir Putin in Sochi, where the two exchanged views particularly on energy, gave new impetus for further cooperation between the two countries.

"We are grateful to have seen Namibia at the IPU in Russia in 2017. Cooperation at IPU level is of utmost importance. When the two Presidents met in Sochi, they created conditions to push our business and investment relations further. Cooperation between our two parliaments can also assist in the deepening of this friendship", noted Matviyenko.

At a meeting with President Hage Geingob in a series of events that formed part of her visit, both Matviyenko and President Geingob were in agreement to design a policy framework meant for visa liberalisation between the two countries. Other areas of interest included the increase in the number of scholarships to Namibian students studying in Russia, youth exchange programmes, and mineral exploration.

Hon. Matviyenko presented a donation of drought relief food items to the office of the Prime Minister. She also laid a wreath at Heroes' Acre in remembrance of fallen Namibian heroes and heroines.



Presiding officers of the Namibian Parliament, Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi (right) and Chairperson of the National Council, Hon. Bernard Sibalatani (left) with the visiting Chairperson of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, Hon. Valentina Matviyenko (middle).

MPs CONCERNED ABOUT

Alarming Challenges at the borders

The Audit Committee of the National Council called on the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security as well as the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform to urgently address issues and challenges facing Immigration and Police officials at the borders.

Officials based at various border posts such as Dobe Boarder, Mohembo, Sarusungu, and Katwitwi were in dire need of basic services such as accommodation, water, uniform, and connectivity. These challenges were discovered and reported in 2019 by the National Council Standing Committee on Security, Constitutional and Legal Affairs.

Furthermore, lack of proper road infrastructure and transport for immigration officials and police were pointed out as challenges that had been overlooked for a long period. Officials at the border posts stressed that problems such as that of transport compromised their patrolling effortlessness of the borders.

The committee discovered this during its regional visits to the border posts in Otjozondjupa, Kavango East, and Kavango West, to assess the impact made

by the oversight activities of the National Council Standing Committee on Security, Constitutional and Legal Affairs and the National Council Standing Committee on Urban and Rural Development, undertaken in the Financial Year 2019/2020.

The Audit Committee is the overall committee responsible for auditing the work of other Parliamentary Standing Committees of the National Council, hence its mandate is to scrutinise and report to the National Council on the work of any Standing Committee or any other body as may be determined by the National Council.

Other critical challenges included lack of COVID-19 preventative measures such as sanitisers and testing equipment for arrivals, particularly at Dobe border post in Otjozondjupa region, Sarusungu border post in Kavango East, and Katwitwi border post in Kavango West region.

Officials stationed at Mohembo border control which is situated between Namibia and Botswana further stressed that it took about four to five years for a Minister or Executive Director to visit them and get to assess the status of the borders.

The Chairperson of the Audit Committee Hon. Lebbius Tobias told the officials that the committee visited the border posts to assess whether what was reported as challenges by the National Council Standing Committees was true or not, and whether such challenges were addressed or not.

"We are at pains to see you with challenges that are not yet addressed. Why are we neglecting our fellow Namibians? We really need to take care of our fellow Namibians" said Hon. Tobias.

He informed the officials that as the chairperson of the committee, he would engage the ministers involved to ensure that these shocking challenges were addressed.

"As the Chairperson of the committee I am going to see face to face the ministers involved, and show them these challenges that need urgent attention. We want you to work happily as sons and daughters of this country. But also when there are no funds you as Namibians will understand, but you need to be spoken to," he emphasised.



Chairperson of the Audit Committee in the National Council, Hon. Lebbius Tobias holding a meeting with officials at the Wenela border post in the Zambezi region.

SEXUAL REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS *essential*

Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi is hopeful that the capacity building workshop on sexual reproductive health and rights for members of parliament then in Otjiwarongo, would culminate into good legislation to tackle the many challenges Namibia is grappling with. Hon. Prof. Katjavivi said this when he officially opened a two-day workshop on 9 July 2020.

The gathering that followed the launching of the 2nd phase of the SADC Parliamentary Forum's SRHR, HIV and AIDS governance project by the Speaker early this year was intended to empower lawmakers with the necessary knowledge and skills to actively engage in fact-based debates and formulate legislation.

The project aimed to sensitize individuals on choices regarding their sexuality and reproductive health rights despite their age, gender or HIV status. At the legislative level, the aim was to empower members to debate motions and scrutinize bills in Parliament that sought to address issues of sexual reproductive health rights.

According to Hon. Prof. Katjavivi, apart from legislation, members of parliament as representatives of the electorate could also serve as advocates for sexual reproductive rights. "It is expected to empower MPs to introduce motions and analyse Bills tabled in the National Assembly that seek to address Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights. It seeks to sensitize individuals on choices regarding their sexuality and reproductive health



Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi officially opening the SRHR, HIV and AIDS governance project.



Members of Parliament at the official opening of the Workshop.

and rights. As lawmakers, we are in a position to influence and advocate for laws best suited to the needs and aspirations of our people", said the Speaker.

He noted that the implementation of the project that would run from 2019 to 2022 would depend on key parliamentary standing committees. Committees identified to champion these issues included the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Gender, Social Development and Family affairs and the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resources and Community Development.

He further stated that targeted legislation was expected to tackle a myriad of sexual reproductive issues such as sexual gender based violence, early and unintended pregnancies, discrimination, and the rights of key populations.

The Speaker revealed some of the legislative successes made since the project's inception in 2014 adding that a number of motions were introduced including SADC PF model laws that had been adopted in the region. He singled out the model law on eradicating Child Marriage and protecting children already in marriage and the Minimum Standards for the protection of key populations in the SADC region. The SADC PF was also finalising a gender based violence model law for adoption.

Echoing similar sentiments, SADC Parliamentary Forum Secretary General, Boemo Sekgoma, stated that during the first phase of the project numerous oversight visits took place in different regions of Namibia with many sexual health

issues uncovered that had since been integrated into parliamentary debates and motions. Challenges uncovered at the time included, poor accessibility to health facilities, lack of health personnel, lack of and poor health infrastructure, poverty, high teenage pregnancy, gender based violence, and discrimination of key populations.

She further lauded the parliament of Namibia for its pro-activeness. "The parliament of Namibia was among the first SADC parliaments to adopt a motion in relation to the eradication of child marriage and betrothals", said Sekgoma who addressed lawmakers virtually.

Sekgoma is also concerned about increasing cases of sexual gender-based violence in the SADC region amidst the COVID-19 calamity. "Evidence has illustrated the alarming increase in rates of SGBV amidst lockdown restrictions, resulting in unintended pregnancies as well as forced and child marriages", moaned Sekgoma.

The current project, worth 3.2 million US Dollars would be implemented in 14 SADC member states. It was funded by the Swedish government.



SPEAKER IMPLORES AFRICAN PARLIAMENTS *to do more for refugees*

Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi has urged African countries to find enduring solutions to forced displacement of people on the continent. Hon. Prof. Katjavivi made the plea while addressing the 10th Bi-Annual conference of Speakers of African Parliaments in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The conference, organized by the Pan African Parliament was held under the theme *"Finding durable solutions to forced migrations to accelerate integration and development in Africa: The role of national and regional Parliaments"*.

The Pan African parliament is the continental legislative body.

According to Hon. Prof. Katjavivi despite the adoption of both the OAU and Kampala Conventions on refugees, a lot still needs to be done to address the perennial challenge of displacement. "As we accelerate integration and development in Africa, we need to face the challenge of finding durable solutions to the forced displacement of people across

many of our countries, whether that be the movement of people from one country to another or one region of a country to another", noted Hon. Prof. Katjavivi.

He further noted that those that were displaced should be empowered to be able to contribute to the welfare of both their host and native countries as well as their families. "If we also provide the opportunity for displaced people to contribute to the welfare of their host nations, they will be able to contribute to the welfare of their families they may have left back home. In Namibia, we know of many young people who came as refugee children, received an education in Namibia and now are contributing to our country in various fields", said the Speaker.

Hon. Prof. Katjavivi hailed the role of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a UN agency with the mandate to protect refugees and assist in voluntary repatriation and local integration.

"Local integration is supported by UNHCR, which plays a crucial role in



Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi.

assisting and supporting countries that receive refugees. This partnership is very much appreciated by those of us who host refugees in their countries", noted Hon. Prof. Katjavivi. ■

5TH SESSION OF CHILDREN'S Parliament opened

The Children's Parliament, a platform that facilitates the participation of children and young people in the democratic process, was officially opened on 19 August 2019, by the Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi.

Over 90 learners from Namibia's 14 regions gathered for the one-week event that sought to both familiarise young people with the legislative process and adopt legislation and policies pertaining to the rights of children. The Fifth Children's Parliament is an initiative of the Namibian Parliament in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

According to Hon. Prof. Katjavivi, the Children's Parliament is further premised on the Namibian Constitution that called for freedom of expression and fundamental human rights. "The purpose of the Children Parliament is to inculcate or cultivate a democratic culture amongst our youth as they prepare to become leaders of tomorrow. It calls for the need to provide space for different views to be heard, including those views that you may not necessarily agree with as articulated in Articles 17 and 21 of the Namibian Constitution", said Hon. Prof. Katjavivi.

This year's session is the fifth since the inception of the Children's Parliament. According to the Speaker, the previous session was a resounding success that culminated into progressive legislation. "The fourth session of the Children's Parliament was held from 06th to 10th May 2013. Altogether we had 98 motions that were tabled and debated. Input from the fourth session were incorporated in the

Child Care and Protection Act and Policy on the need to give a second chance to young pregnant girls to go back to school after delivery as well as those who fail Grade 10", noted Hon. Prof. Katjavivi.

Hon. Speaker noted that Namibia attached great importance to the rights of children as it had enacted and ratified a myriad of both domestic and international conventions aimed at protecting the rights of children. "The National Assembly has over the years passed and adopted national laws and international instruments to protect the children and promote their rights such as UN Convention on the rights of the child, ILO Convention on prohibition of worsts forms of Child Labour, the Combating of Rape Act, Child Protection Act and National Orphans and Vulnerable Children Policy among others", stated Hon. Prof. Katjavivi.

The learners went through an intensive induction programme and were sworn in for a two-year period as members of the fifth Children's Parliament with a Speaker and a Deputy Speaker. They were expected to break into Standing Committees during the course of the week to look at pertinent issues such as education, ICT, rights of children, climate change, health, and other social matters.

Speaking at the same event, UNICEF Country Representative, Rachell Odede echoed similar sentiments adding that the Children's Parliament was an opportunity for young people to make their voices heard and address societal issues that continued to affect their welfare. "This is an opportunity for children to engage lawmakers and show them their



The Children's Parliament during one of the sessions.

aspirations, hopes and fears and make sure that every right is realized for every child now and generations to come. Decisions we take should be in the best interest of children because we would like them to inherit a better planet. This is an opportunity for young people to be listened to. Too many young lives are cut short today because children are subjected to issues of discrimination, climate change, violence and conflict among others", said Odede.

The session under the theme "Engaging young people in the legislative process" was also addressed by Edward Ndopu, internationally acclaimed activist and humanitarian who was physically disabled and wheel chair bound. Ndopu has worked for many leading organisations including, RTW Investments, World Economic Forum, UN Women and Amnesty International. He is soon expected to make history by being the first physically disabled person to deliver a televised address to the UN from Space to create great awareness surrounding SDGs.



The over 90 learners that were sworn in as Members of the fifth session of the Children's Parliament in the National Assembly chamber pose for a group photo.

COMMONWEALTH DAY

observed

The Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi hosted the commemoration of Commonwealth day at the Namibian parliament on 9 March 2020. The Speaker read the Queen's statement that called for a common future through a united front. Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II is the Head of the Commonwealth.

The countries of Botswana, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia, Tanzania and United Kingdom were represented by their diplomats at the annual event that was meant to foster cooperation between member states as they strive to promote peace, democracy, and equality.

The Commonwealth is an association comprising 54 countries from Africa, the Caribbean and Americas, the Pacific and Europe. According to a press release issued by the British High Commission, the commemoration further strengthened efforts towards achieving goals agreed during the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting held in London which included mitigating climate change and its impact, encouraging inclusive economic empowerment, fair trade and delivering a common future by connecting, innovating and transforming commonwealth societies.

The Deputy Dean of the Commonwealth Heads of Mission in Namibia who is also the High Commissioner of Malaysia to Namibia, H.E. Hishamuddin Ibrahim reiterated the association's core values adding that while promoting cooperation, it respected member countries' sovereignty. "The Commonwealth was formed to ensure that there would never be another occasion where any country, by virtue of its wealth, size, population or military might would colonise or enslave another. We have sixteen core values and principles which include, democracy, human rights, peace, freedom of expression, good governance, gender equality and others", noted the High Commissioner.

Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Hon. Christine //Hoebes noted that

Namibia valued its commonwealth membership, adding that the country continued to receive tangible benefits from the association. "Namibia has benefitted from the Commonwealth Technical Assistance Fund through the secondment of Commonwealth experts and advisers who have provided assistance to our government in the fields of marine and coastal resources research, biosafety and biotechnology and information technology and aquaculture", said //Hoebes.

She further stated that the Commonwealth Youth Programme had given loans to young people resulting in over 7 000 jobs since its inception in 2005.

This year's event held under the theme "Delivering a common future: Connecting, Innovating, Transforming" also saw the newly opened Tanzanian



The Deputy Dean of the Commonwealth Heads of Mission in Namibia who is also the High Commissioner of Malaysia to Namibia, H.E. Hishamuddin Ibrahim delivering his statement during Commonwealth Day.

embassy joining other member countries in celebrating the event. ■



Heads of Mission gather at the commemoration of Commonwealth day.



A colourful Cultural performance formed part of the festivities.

6TH PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEES

reflect on Achievements and Challenges

The eight (8) Parliamentary Standing Committees of the 6th Parliament held a farewell meeting where they reflected on the achievements and challenges as the Committees' tenure came to an end.

During the past five years, the Parliamentary Standing Committees of the 6th Parliament performed its oversight mandate in line with the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, in particular, Article 59 and Article 63 (2) and (9) and the Standing Rules and Orders of the National Assembly, by conducting oversight on the programmes and activities of the line Ministries, Offices and Agencies, including State Owned Enterprises and Statutory Bodies.

"During our tenure as the 6th Parliament under operational activities we attended to thirty nine Bills tabled, fifteen Bills were passed with amendments, thirteen were reconsidered from national Council, eighteen International instruments were tabled, twenty-nine motions were referred to various standing committees, four motions were withdrawn, three motions were rejected and two motions were redirected to be dealt with by the responsible Minister



Some of the Members of the eight (8) Parliamentary Standing Committees of the 6th Parliament.

while one motion was ruled out of order," stressed the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Hon. Mike Kavekatora who was speaking on behalf of all eight Parliamentary Standing Committees.

The Committee highlighted on some of the hearings conducted country-wide as well as investigations carried out during its tenure with some leading persons to reviewing of policies such as the one on 'Prevention and Management of Learners pregnancies' as a result of the Committee's findings and recommendations.

Another one was on Interventions done by the Standing Committees of the 6th Parliament on the Namibian Student Assistance fund (NSFAF). This led to the review of the entire fund and its management.

At an international level, Kavekatora highlighted that the Committees through the Permanent Delegation assigned to the meetings of the ACP-EU were nominated to table a motion on behalf of Namibia on Sustainable Industrialization and Digitalisation and the report was adopted in December 2019 at the 38th session of the ACP-EU JPA held in Kigali, Rwanda.

Kavekatora shared some light on some of the challenges faced by the Committees such as lack of institutionalized mechanisms to monitor and evaluate



Some of the Members of the eight (8) Parliamentary Standing Committees of the 6th Parliament.

the work done at Committee level and the non-automatic referrals to Bills to committees, amongst other challenges.

The Chairpersons of the parliamentary Standing Committees collectively thanked all stakeholders including the general public at different platforms for their support and confidence during the last five (5) years.

The work of the Parliamentary standing Committees is continuing under the 7th Parliament with new members coming in as well as some old ones remaining to continue with the work of their respective committees.



Chairperson of the of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Hon. Mike Kavekatora and the Chairperson of the Economics Committee, Hon. Heather Sibungo.



Members of the eight (8) Parliamentary Standing Committees of the 6th Parliament.

PARLIAMENT *Journal*

Guidelines for Contributors

1. Stories/Articles must be in Microsoft Word.
2. Feature articles must be not more than 1500 words long and ordinary stories not more than 1000 words long. Longer or shorter articles/stories may be considered subject to their quality and relevance to the scope of the Journal.
3. Font: Arial
4. Spacing: 1.5
5. Stories/Articles must be original, not previously published, and should not be under consideration for publication by another journal.
6. Closing dates for submission of stories/articles:
Last Week of February, May, August, November.



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