



Electoral Commission of Namibia

MOTIVATION FOR BUDGET

VOTE 28:

ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF NAMIBIA

2017/2018 FINANCIAL YEAR

INTRODUCED BY

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Check against delivery

**HON. CHAIRPERSON OF THE WHOLE HOUSE
COMMITTEE,**

HON. MEMBERS,

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the budget for Vote 28, Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) for the 2017/2018 financial year.

A total amount of **Sixty Six Million, Nine Hundred and Fourteen Thousand Namibian Dollars** (N\$66,914,000.00) is being requested for consideration and approval by Parliament.

As the Honourable Members of this august House are well aware, the Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) was established by an Act of Parliament and has now become a constitutional body following the Constitutional Third Amendment Act of 2014. The Electoral Act, Act 5 of 2014, sets out clear objectives of the ECN - to organize, direct, supervise, manage and control the conduct of elections and referenda in a free, fair, independent, credible, transparent and impartial manner as well as to strengthen constitutional democracy and to promote democratic electoral and referenda processes.

On order to carry out such objectives the ECN employed various modern technologies. It is rewarding to note the following on the use of modern technologies. The ECN was conferred with an award from the International Centre for Parliamentary Studies (ICPS) in recognition of the ECN's achievement in Electoral Management, also known as Electoral Ergonomy, in December 2016.

The Electoral Ergonomy Award recognizes Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) and Electoral Officials which tailored electoral procedures to the psychology of their voter and the specific characteristics of their electorate. Initiatives nominated for the award may pertain to any aspect of electoral ergonomy, such as the design of the polling ballots or adaptation of voting machines, the organization of the polling station or the polling booth, research on alternative voting mechanisms such as advanced, postal, or electronic voting.

Furthermore, the award recognizes the ECN's tireless efforts to improve the electoral processes, particularly in the entire African continent. What makes the accomplishment of the ECN so notably impressive is the fact that the Commission sought to make use of the new approach in problem-solving technics, namely, using innovative technology solutions as a tool to fix electoral systems and processes.

The introduction of **biometric voter registration system** and **Electronic Voting Machines** won the Electoral Commission of Namibia international accolades the world over - not only from their SADC regional EMB's, but the entire African continent and beyond. The ingenious utilization of innovative and revolutionary technological solutions in managing elections makes the ECN the most deserving candidate of this award. From our side, we must congratulate the Electoral Commission of Namibia for a job well done.

In this year, the ECN has three crucial programmes under its budget, namely:

- (1) Voter Education and Information Dissemination,
- (2) Administration of Elections, and
- (3) Supervision and Support Services.

With the above mentioned background let me focus on the following two major aspects: First, the budget for 2017/18 Financial Year of the ECN, including major challenges, and second, on the specific programmes to be carried out during the 2017/18 financial budget year.

1. Budget for 2017/18 Financial Year

The proposed ceiling for 2017/2018 financial year has been cut from N\$ 106 million to N\$ 66 million. That means the total budget has been cut with N\$40 million. At the same time the entire Capital Project budget was cut to zero for the next three year MTEF period.

From the N\$ 66 million an amount of N\$44.6 million has been put aside and remains intact for the personnel expenditure, for both permanent and temporary staff. However, the non- personnel expenditures has been reduced to N\$22 million.

Usually, such an amount of N\$ 22 million under normal circumstances are merely for one division in the ECN and not for the whole agency. It means that the N\$22 million shall be distributed ~~at~~ amongst all divisions of the ECN. Put it differently, the entire operations of the ECN will be greatly challenged during the 2017/18 Financial Year due to the drastic budget cuts.

2. The Breakdown of the Budget for the Three Programmes of the ECN

The breakdown of the budget for the three programmes of the Electoral Commission is as follows:

2.1 Voter and Civic Education and Information Dissemination

Voter and Civic Education is one of the core functions of the ECN and normally precedes all other electoral activities; therefore, the ECN has designed a comprehensive voter education and information dissemination campaign aimed at informing all eligible voters about these important events on the election calendar.

In terms of Section 49 (1) (a) of the Electoral Act 5, of 2014, the Commission must, when supervising, directing, controlling and promoting voter and civic education - pursue the objective to make the meaning and purpose of elections well understood by the electorate.

The ECN will continue to use the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and all other devices in all the by-elections to be undertaken during this MTEF period. It is the mandate of this programme to ensure that all the eligible voters are accorded the opportunity to have all the required information on electoral processes. The voter education sessions together with advertisements will complement each other to help give required information to the public in order to make the public aware of the EVMs and other electoral processes.

Thus, an amount of **Five Million, Five Hundred and Fifty Five Thousand Namibian Dollars** (N\$ 5, 555, 000.00) has been allocated for Voter Education. Under normal circumstances an amount of approximately **Twenty Million Namibian Dollars** (N\$ 20 million) is set aside!

The amount will be used on the following activities of the ECN:

- 1) to conduct voter education and disseminate voter information,
- 2) to promote democratic culture and good governance so as to ensure credible election processes, and
- 3) raise public awareness on elections, democracy building and political tolerance during elections.
- 4) monitor and evaluate of all voter education activities, and
- 5) conduct democracy and electoral research and survey.

2.2 Administration of Elections

In terms of the provision of Section 49 (2) of the Electoral Act, 2014, the ECN is mandated to hold elections and/or referenda to ensure good governance and the consolidation of our representative democracy.

During the forthcoming financial year, the ECN must make contingency provisions for by-elections. In the real world, by-elections are a real possibility. They may emerge without a warning in case of a vacancy as a result of the resignation or death of any of the councillors of any Regional Council.

Like the budget for Voter and Civic Education the amount for Administration of Elections is the same, namely an amount of **Five Million, Five Hundred and Fifty Five Thousand Namibian Dollars** (N\$ 5, 555, 000.00) has been allocated.

The following required activities to be carried out:

- a. Registration of Voters,
- b. Holding of By-elections,
- c. Update of Voters Register,
- d. Auditing of Voter Verification Devices (VVD's), Mobile Voters Registration Kits (MVRK's), and Electronic Voting Machines (EVM's),
- e. At this stage consultations be conducted with political parties and other stakeholders on implementation of the utilization of paper trail and challenges with regard to the paper trail such as non-recoverable errors like paper jam and paper not printed. Furthermore, as the Honourable

members are aware, the new Electoral Act, Act No.5 of 2014 was promulgated on 8 October 2014 and implemented on 17 October 2014, but with the exception of Section 97 (3) relating to the utilization of verifiable paper trail for every vote cast by a voter, whereby any vote cast is verified by a count of the paper trail.

2.3 Supervision and Support Services

The purpose of this programme is to provide administrative support to all the ECN's programmes to ensure the proper financial management, optimal utilization of the allocated resources and other administrative issues. Therefore, an amount of **Eleven Million, One Hundred and Eight Thousand Namibia Dollars (N\$ 11, 108, 31,312,000.00)** has been allocated to ensure the smooth running of the day-to-day activities of the Electoral Commission of Namibia. The amount of **Eleven Million** will be distributed among the following sections for their daily activities:

- 1) Office of the Chairperson
- 2) Office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO)
- 3) Finance Division
- 4) Human Resource Management
- 5) Auxiliary Services, and
- 6) IT Section

The major activities carried out under this programme include:

- a) Electoral Act Amendment Workshop
- b) Strategic Planning Workshop
- c) Political Party Meetings
- d) Training & Development, Gender mainstreaming and Capacity Building,
- e) Acquisition and Maintenance of Information Technology (IT) Equipment and Systems,
- f) General Administration Costs,
- g) International fees and Subscription, and
- h) Wellness Promotion, Prevention and Mitigation of HIV/AIDS.

3 Conclusion

Hon. Chairperson of the Whole House Committee,

Hon. Members,

In keeping with its mandate, the ECN is obliged by law to conduct all possible by-elections as well as all the electoral activities highlighted above during this financial year. This presentation

makes a case for the activities and programmes that the ECN wishes to undertake during the year.

At the same time the budget of the ECN has been cut with an amount of N\$ 40 million and the entire operational budget will face major challenges. Despite such challenges, hopefully, the ECN has to discharge these duties successfully and thereby uphold the democratic principles and tenets of democracy enshrined in our Constitution and the Electoral Law of the Republic of Namibia.

In Conclusion, I urge all Honourable Members of this August House to support these motivations and approve the budget of **Sixty Six Million, Nine Hundred and Fourteen Thousand Namibian Dollars** (N\$66,914,000.00) for the Electoral Commission of Namibia for the 2017/2018 financial year.

I THANK YOU

