



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**MOTIVATION SPEECH FOR BUDGET
ESTIMATES FOR THE**

2017/2018 FINANCIAL YEAR

FOR VOTE 03

BY

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THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

WINDHOEK

11th APRIL 2017

**Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House Committee,
Honourable Members,**

I rise to motivate budgetary allocations for Vote 03, National Assembly, for your consideration. First and foremost, I would like to appreciate the manner in which the Minister of Finance, Honourable Calle Schlettwein, and his entire team, have produced this well-articulated budget. Furthermore, the flowery and poetic language that the Minister deployed in his budget statement did not escape our attention.

THE INTRODUCTION

**Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House Committee,
Honourable Members,**

In fulfilling its oversight function, Parliament has to oversee the prudent management and utilisation of limited financial resources of the country. This is expected to lead to nation-building and sustainable socio-economic development of the country.

In terms of Article 63 (2) (a) of the Namibian Constitution, the budget process and debate on the Appropriation Bill is a constitutional requirement and is one of the most significant events in the Calendar of Parliament during any Financial Year. This process continues to foster a

culture of accountability and transparency within the Government, as the public has to be enlightened on the benefits of the programmes and activities of the Government of the day.

We are painfully aware that the Namibian economy is emerging from a financially stormy situation and that this budget is being debated against the backdrop of a challenging fiscal and economic environment.

**Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House Committee,
Honourable Members,**

I want to assure this august House that we will support the Minister of Finance in achieving what he set out to do in his Budget Speech delivered on 08th March 2017, namely to:

- Strengthen macroeconomic fundamentals and rebuilding fiscal buffers;
- Support inclusive growth and economic diversification;
- Contribute to the eradication of poverty and the improvement of social welfare;
- Further contribute to reduction of income inequalities and achieving shared prosperity; and
- Deliver timely, reliable and affordable public services and meeting Government contractual obligations.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2016/2017 FINANCIAL YEAR

**Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House Committee,
Honourable Members,**

Having stated the above, let me now briefly explain how we have spent the money that was allocated to the National Assembly in the 2016/2017 Financial Year, especially the Development Budget.

The Construction of the New Parliament Building

As you are all aware, the space in the current Parliament Building is inadequate. It cannot provide sufficient sitting for the entire parliament in the Chamber as well as adequate office space for staff and MPs. In addition, the envisaged creation of the Legislative Service Commission will definitely require office space. In other words, the space within the current parliament building does not tally with the increased number of Parliamentarians and consequent support services.

An amount of *Fourteen Million Six Hundred and Six Thousand Namibian Dollars (N\$14 606 000.00)* was originally allocated to the Development Budget. The budget cut which was effected after the Budget Review reduced the National Assembly's Development Budget to *Eight Million Two Hundred and Eighty Six Thousand Namibian Dollars (N\$8 286 000.00)*.

The renovation of the SADC Parliamentary Forum Building started in the 2014/2015 Financial Year and received an allocation of *Three Million Seven Hundred and One Thousand Namibian Dollars (N\$3 701 000)* in the 2015/2016 Financial Year. This was followed-up *with an amount of One Million Namibian Dollars (N\$1, 000, 000.00)* in the 2016/2017 Financial Year. *I regret to inform this august House that the Contractor did not deliver on time. The Contractor has been given additional three months to finish the task. Nonetheless, SADC-PF Secretariat upon their request, for convenience and cost savings, have been allowed to move back into the building while the contractor does the final touches.*

The upgrading and renovation of the Parliament Building is an ongoing project and will remain on the radar until such time that a permanent solution has been found.

Challenges posed by Budget Cuts in the 2016/2017 Financial Year

It was rather unfortunate that during the last financial year, the budget cuts greatly affected especially our Committee Services Division and almost grinded its operations to a halt. Here, I want to strongly emphasize that Parliament is not like any other Government institution and for this matter, most budgetary terminologies used on certain institutional departments do not apply to Parliament. The work of

Parliamentary Standing Committees forms the core of parliamentary work as provided for by the Constitution.

Milestones of the 2016/2017 Financial Year

Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House Committee,

Honourable Members,

Let me briefly touch on some of the milestones that we have achieved during the period under review.

Constitutional Oversight Role of the National Assembly

Regarding the Operational Budget, apart from the practical administrative activities of the Secretariat and the House, the Standing Committees have continued to conduct their oversight activities in different regions of the country. This is to assess the implementation of capital projects in the regions.

During the period under review, **twenty (20)** Bills were tabled in the House. Out these, **sixteen (16)** were passed without amendments, while **three (3)** were passed with amendments, while one was referred back. **One hundred and one (101)** Auditor-General Reports as well as **twenty-two (22)** Ministerial Reports were also tabled in the House. On

top of that, **twenty-six (26)** Standing Committee Reports were tabled in the House.

In keeping in line with our long-standing democratic tradition, **one hundred and ten (110)** questions were asked with notice and out of those, **one hundred and seven (107)** were replied to. Thus only **three (3)** questions lapsed without being responded to. During the period under review, **one hundred and eight (108)** Committee meetings were held while **five (5)** public hearings were conducted.

**Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House Committee,
Honourable Members,**

The Funding of Political Parties under Coordination and Support Services division

The funding of Political Parties was also provided for under the Coordination and Support Services Division of the National Assembly and in line with our democratic practice, an amount of *Seventy Nine Million Nine Hundred and Twenty Five Thousand (N\$ 79, 925 000.00)* was allocated to Political Parties in the previous financial year.

It is worth noting that effective 1st April 2017, all funding for Political Parties represented in the National Assembly will no longer be

channelled through the National Assembly budget but rather directly be handled from the Ministry of Finance.

**Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House Committee,
Honourable Members,**

The International Cooperation Mandate

As part of our international commitment and obligation, both the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker as well as some Members of Parliament attended various meetings of the SADC-Parliamentary Forum, the Pan African Parliament (PAP), the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) as well as the African Caribbean and Pacific group of countries and the European Union (ACP-EU) joint assemblies. It is equally important here, to note that Namibia through the National Assembly hosted the last ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, here in Windhoek. As far as SADC-PF and PAP are concerned, participation of our Members of Parliament included elections observation in member states.

BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR THE 2017/2018 FINANCIAL YEAR

**Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House Committee,
Honourable Members,**

For the Financial Year 2017/2018, the National Assembly *has been allocated* an amount of **One Hundred and Ten Million Eight Hundred and Twenty Four Thousand Namibian Dollars (N\$110, 824, 000.00)** for Operational Costs and **Twenty Four Million Namibian dollar (N\$24, 000, 000.00)** for the Development Budget.

Twenty Four Million Namibian Dollars (N\$24 000 000.00) have been allocated for the *Upgrading and Renovation of the Parliament Building*.

**Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House Committee,
Honourable Members,**

With regard to the Operational Budget, the National Assembly has clustered its activities under two (2) main programmes, namely; **Legislative Management, and Coordination and Support Services.**

Programme 1: Legislative Management:

An amount of **Eighteen Million Nine Hundred and Eighty Two Thousand Namibian Dollars (N\$18, 982, 000.00)** has been allocated to this programme.

The aim of this programme is to provide leadership, guidance and specialised support in respect to Parliamentary proceedings and procedures, and related administrative services to the Presiding Officers and Members of Parliament. The programme's activities include, among others, the timely and accurate processing of Session Papers, Legislation and the production of the National Assembly's Hansard. Furthermore, both the Speaker and Deputy Speaker undertake domestic, regional and international liaisons, for instance with SADC-PF, Pan-African Parliament (PAP), Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Association of European Parliamentarians With Africa (AWEPA) and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and all these, include travel and upkeep expenses.

Furthermore, Both the Speaker and Deputy Speaker have a platform of Parliamentary Community Outreach, which is part of the overall National Assembly's programme of *'Taking Parliament to the People'*. The purpose of this programme is to undertake fact finding missions and further, to deepen the public's understanding of the legislature as well as to help government in solving societal challenges in a spirit of collective or participatory sustainable development in one Namibian House.

It should be noted that Legislative Management also includes activities of the Youth/Children Parliament of the Republic of Namibia.

Programme 2: Coordination and Support Services:

An amount of *One Hundred and Fifteen Million Eight Hundred and Forty Two Thousand Namibian Dollars (N\$115, 842, 000.00)* has been allocated to this programme.

This programme is sub divided into **four (4)** Main Divisions namely:
Parliamentary Coordination and Support Services, Information Services, Committee Services and Legal Services.

Parliamentary Coordination and Support Services Division provides administrative support through proper financial management and optimal deployment of human resources, the provision of transport and legal advice to the Vote's programmes and, training and capacity development for Members of Parliament and the Parliamentary staff members. Very important to note is that, as mentioned earlier, effective 1st April 2017, the National Assembly will no longer handle any funds related to Political Party Funding.

This Parliamentary Coordination and Support Services Division has received a budget allocation of *Forty Four Million Two Hundred and Eighty Five Thousand Namibian Dollar (N\$44, 285, 000.00)*, of which

Twenty Four Million Namibian Dollars (N\$24, 000, 000.00) is, as indicated above, earmarked for the Development Budget.

Information Services Division is responsible for the provision of relevant and up-to- date information, research, library and modern ICT services to Members of Parliament and the Secretariat.

As we may all note, technology is an important enabler for many operational processes at the National Assembly. Therefore, for the sake of communication and information sharing, we have to make sure that staff and Members of the National Assembly have access to digital media such as emails and the internet. To this effect, a wireless network (Wi-Fi) has been upgraded and is accessible to Members of Parliament and the Secretariat. Furthermore, we are introducing the *e-Library* whereby most of our documents including parliamentary proceedings will be accessed electronically by Members, well in advance of the sitting of the House. In addition, we also have a Parliamentary Website and the hosting and maintenance of this website comes with costs.

This Division, specifically the information and research department, under the theme of “*Taking Parliament to the People*” creates an important platform to engage the electorate on issues of national concern, including sensitising them on the legislative process. The

National Assembly participated in various trade exhibitions. Also, numerous schools and tertiary educational institutions visited Parliament. In order to reach out to more school-going youth, the National Assembly has designed a new Parliamentary School Outreach Programme that aims at enhancing the learners' knowledge and understanding of Namibia's parliamentary system. During the period under review, the programme was conducted in Omusati and Zambezi Regions; where about 6, 151 grade 10 -12 learners from 10 secondary schools benefitted from presentations done by the National Assembly staff. Apart from that, lectures on parliamentary activities were also given to 2, 891 learners from 47 schools and other institutions of higher learning who visited the National Assembly during the period under review. For the period under review, the National Assembly managed to reach out to about **twenty-eight thousand (28 000)** citizens - judging by the number of people who attended the trade fairs and business expos where we displayed and promoted our materials.

The Information Services Division is allocated an amount of *Eleven Million and Forty Seven Thousand Namibian Dollars (N\$ 11, 047, 000.00)*.

Committee Services Division steers domestic, regional and international liaisons with sister institutions and the public. In addition,

Committees undertake parliamentary oversight outreach visits to the various regions of our country and they also conduct public hearings within the premises of parliament or elsewhere. The Committee Services Division is the main pillar in the *Parliamentary Community Outreach Programme of Taking Parliament to the People*.

Therefore, Committee Services Division with its ultimate aim being to provide operational, administrative, secretarial and clerical assistance and guidance to Committees, has been allocated an amount of **Fifty Seven Million Four Hundred and Thirty Six Thousand Namibia Dollars (N\$ 57, 436, 000.00)**. As earlier mentioned, last year's budget for Committee Services was heavily undermined and this time round, we should ensure that this is not repeated.

Legal Services Division's main objective is to provide legal advice to the Office of the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Secretary and Members of Parliament via Committee Services. Furthermore, Legal Services Division is also tasked to provide summary reports on Bills to be tabled in the House, i.e., to express these Bills in a demystified language that can be easily understood by all the lawmakers.

An amount of **Three Million and Seventy Four Thousand Namibia Dollar (N\$3, 074, 000.00)** has been allocated to this Main Division.

CONCLUSION

**Honourable Chairperson of the Whole House Committee,
Honourable Members,**

In conclusion, I would like to request you, Honourable Members, to kindly approve our budget request of *One Hundred and Thirty Four Million Eight Hundred and Twenty Four Thousand Namibian Dollars (N\$134, 824, 000.00) for Vote 03.*

I thank you!