



***Republic of Namibia***  
***MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE***

Response by the  
Honourable Katrina Hanse Himarwa, MP  
MINISTER

to  
Parliamentary  
Questions by Hon. Usutuaije Maamberua, MP

on  
the statue of Kurt Von Francois

1

Honourable Speaker,

Honourable Members of Parliament,

I thank the Hon Usutuaije Maamberua, MP for his important questions posed to me on the 16<sup>th</sup> of April 2015.

The matters raised by him are important and therefore a cause for reflection and introspection, considering <sup>that</sup> we are marking 25 years of democracy and independence from the yolk of colonialism. Indeed the legacy of colonialism in Namibia has been one of many recorded and untold atrocities against our people. As an ongoing process of our nation building ~~process~~ it is the view of our government that the legacy of apartheid and colonialism should continue to be addressed, particularly the distortion of significant historical aspects, such as the ones raised by Hon Maamberua.

However, with independence also came reconciliation, which means Namibians of all persuasions including descendants of settler communities, have become part of our new nation building process. This does not mean that I seek to justify the incorrect reflection of our history, but merely that the heritage of our nation should be balanced,

fair and reflective of <sup>where</sup> whence we come, both negative and positive. In short Hon speaker, members of this August House, I am saying that whilst history must be corrected were misrepresented, it is nevertheless important that we acknowledge our heritage.

In respect to the questions posed by the Hon Maamberua, I wish to reply as follows.

1. The Hon Maamberua is correct in his observation that indeed if history be told correctly, it is a well-known historical fact that Jonker Afrikaner founded /Ai//Gams (Hot-springs) around 1840, in my understanding and yours too, that was the foundation of Windhoek. Therefore Honorable Maamberua it will not do justice to our history to say that Kurt Von Francois founded Windhoek, as he settled in Windhoek some 4 decades after the oorlam Nama led by Jonker Afrikaner settled in present day Windhoek.
2. Furthermore, I wish to state categorically that this statue is not a national monument in terms of the relevant provisions of the National Heritage Council Act, Act 27 of 2004. In my view, the direction the

statue faces and the decorum it may have enjoyed under previous colonial authorities bears no signifi-  
cance in regards to the view of our present day society.

3. I am informed that the statue was erected on 18 October 1965, apparently in celebration of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Windhoek, I can only infer from this fact that it was not erected as a direct celebration of colonial atrocities but perhaps out of a distorted notion of the founding of Windhoek. Therefore, it can in no way be a celebration of German colonial atrocities by the Government of the Republic of Namibia.
4. The role of my ministry is to preserve and protect all items of historical significance that are proclaimed in terms of the relevant provision of the National Heritage Council Act. I have indicated earlier that this monument does not form part of our register of items of significant heritage; at best the statue's value is but a novelty, which tourists and others may frequent, as they like.

5. Since the defacing of statutes in South Africa occurred, many Namibians now raise the issue of the removal of colonial statues here at home. It is time that we get rid of this syndrome that when South Africa sneezes, we here in Namibia catch a cold. As Minister of Education, Art and Culture, I would urge Namibians to stop copying so called revolutionaries in South Africa and become our own revolutionaries, let us not depend on the thinking and actions of our southern neighbours.
6. Considering the fact that the statue does not fall under the provisions of the National Heritage Act, and that it was erected by the then Municipality of Windhoek in 1965, to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the City, I would advise that the City of Windhoek may consider evaluating the historical, economic and novelty value of this statue and weigh that against the painful past that Namibians have suffered under the hands of people like Von Francois.
7. In conclusion, Hon. Maamberua let me state that I know the history of our country, and I am fully aware of the painful past we come from. I am not unsympathetic to the issues you raised, but we must

take cognizance of the fact that we live in a country where law and order is supreme, and not in a country where you wake up one morning and decide to remove statues at will. You will agree with me that there is a need for a collective, well thought through and systematic response to colonial artefacts. Let us engage as lawmakers on the best modalities to deal with issues such as the ones you raised in your questions.

I thank you.

I so submit Honourable Speaker.