

Speaker's Remarks
First Sitting of the 5th Session of the 5th Parliament

15 February 2012

Hon. Members,

Constitutional democracy favours Parliament as the first among equals. If democracy is indeed the government of the people, by the people and for the people, Parliament has no equals as the pre-eminent centre of lawmaking, accountability and by holding high the ideals of servant leadership and transparency in the eyes of the electorate and the nation at large.

Both the public in general and the young people in particular need constantly to be reassured that promises made by national leaders particularly when elections are held, represent kernels of public trust between them and the highest officebearers in the land. The whole idea of the Children's Parliament has at its core the noble idea of sacred trust that obliges today's leadership to prepare the young ones for tomorrow's opportunities and challenges for a better world.

President Sam Nujoma had said this at the time when the Constitution drafting framework was being discussed: **"Namibia is a huge country with a small population. Therefore all Namibians, regardless of colour, creed or place of origin, have a place in our beautiful country. It is for us to reach out to one another and mould a new nation out of diversity."** How much this was true then 23 years ago as it is so manifestly true today, but in the opposite direction. It is not what we think and say but what we do that confirms the reality on the ground.

I am of the view that Namibia's body politic is slowly but surely entering a slippery terrain which is encouraging disunity and regionalism spurned by tribalism and nepotism of the old fashion kind. That's very dangerous for nationbuilding, political tolerance and mutual respect of public officials at all levels. An artist, once said, *"They say that time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself."* If we as MPs think that way, we will be walking in the same direction and ending up where the Constitution wants us to be. Throw your heart towards the same baobab tree and the others will follow! We must make laws that change the socio-political environment for the better by implementing and monitoring them at all time. We are failing on the fronts of corruption, public administration and service delivery. I heard the PM speaking on this concern. We must re-read what the Constitution says about the powers, the authority and the watchdog duties of the National Assembly.

Hear what the Constitution of the SWAPO Party has to say on matters of nationbuilding and social restructuring, **"..to combat retrogressive tendencies of tribalism, ethnicity, nepotism, racism, sexism, chauvinism, regionalism, personality cult, etc."** We must walk in tandem with the letter and spirit of the Constitution in particular the PREAMBLE. That's what must inform our thinking and temper our public actions as national leaders at all times, otherwise we would be like imposters and wolves in sheep clothing. Dignified and sustained upliftment is what all our people yearn for all the time and everywhere.

His Excellency Dr Pohamba said much yesterday about the core issues of the theme of the Fifth Session of the Fifth Parliament which he declared open yesterday. Parliament stands at the centre of larger vision of our nation's future. As democratization is work in progress, it is far less the Cabinet nor the Courts but the Parliament (National Assembly, for sure) which requires constant and targeted rejuvenation to meet effectively the challenges of sustainable social development and all-round empowerment of the people – all the people not just some.

This is how the President stressed the first part of the theme: **“Our Parliament has always stood, and will continue to stand as the central pillar of our democracy. Tasked with the legislative function, Parliament has the sacred duty to make fair, just, well-researched and thoroughly-debated laws for the nation.”** I personally understood the President not only to have affirmed our collective mandate and duty to serve the public interests but actually saying to the House to do more so that the citizens are truly satisfied and acclaim service delivery and outreach contacts with the words, thank you and amen! At each sitting, we swear and solemnly affirm always to do good without fear, favour or prejudice. The Children's Parliament awaits lessons of political culture and engagements with their elected leaders to know the way to act. Namibia like other Parliaments endorsed the IPU Strategic Plan (2012-2014). Its title is **“Implementing a Strategy for Better Parliaments and Stronger Democracies.”**

Now a word concerning that part of the theme which His Excellency spent time underlining, that is “Preparing for Leadership Transition.” The President has urged us thus: **“With your chosen theme as the guide of your work, I have no doubt that our Parliament will continue to improve all aspects of its operations, while preparing for leadership transition to the younger generation.”** Younger, to my mind means two things, age but also creativity. Some of today's African leaders are young but their minds are shamefully dull, if not reactionary. Namibia needs Mwalimu Julius Nyereres and Thomas Sakaras as a team. Hence the need for preparing for Leadership Transition both horizontally and laterally.

Thank you.