

## **The Genesis of the Genocide Discourse... A Maiden Speech by Dr. Ndjoze-Ojo (MP)**

Hon Speaker, Hon. Members, this is my maiden speech, possibly and most likely the last one, and I may be long. Kindly bear with me.

I rise to contribute to the Motion on Genocide as tabled. However, before I do that, kindly allow me to express gratitude: - Glory be to God who owns the universe and holds the future in His Hands, and who by His Grace and infinite mercies, honor us as mortals with Life and Time to serve His Humanity. I am most grateful to God for saving me from COVID-19 and for practically bringing up my soul from the grave, and thereto, to enable me to serve my beloved country and the nation, yet again. It is by Grace that we are saved, lest we boast.

My thanks also go to the SWAPO Party, my political home for the past 39 years, since I joined it in 1982. Thank you for having provided me with numerous opportunities to serve the nation in different spheres over the past 15 years, and for yet calling me back once again, as per the Electoral College of 2020. Thank you.

Hon Speaker, Hon. Members, my maiden speech is threefold.

**First**, it seeks to briefly recap on Article 1(1) of the Constitution of Namibia, and drawing inferences from that, to lay emphases on the meaning of such concepts for elucidation and possible practical application in practice. And by extension, it critically and briefly touches on our conduct as Honorable Members of this august House, and to ask Questions as Food for Thought and Reflections.

**Second**, it seeks to contribute to the motion on Genocide, Apology and Reparation as tabled and motivated by Hon Kapofi. In so doing, it presents the Genesis of Genocide Discourse as the foundation on which the Joint Declaration Document (JDD) is anchored, and must be perceived.

**Third**, it pays Tribute to both the living and the dead.

## Article 1(1)

The Republic of Namibia is established by Article 1(1) as a sovereign, secular, democratic and unitary State founded upon the principles of democracy, the rule of law and justice for all. (Article 1(1)).

This Article 1(1), is not numbered so, per adventure, but is deliberately done to set the pace, and to set the induction to the Supreme Law of the Land. What does that mean?

- **It means Namibia has inherent Sovereignty**- it has the inherent Right to decide for herself, what is in her interest concerning especially, Key Issues affecting her. In the final analysis, The Republic of Namibia is a self-governing State;
- **It means that as far as religion is concerned, it is not by imposition but by choice.** Nonetheless, Namibia is believed to be more than 90% Christian. Then thus, the democratic principle of majority rules, and by implied practice, Namibia is a Christian nation. Hence, we start our Parliament sessions with the Prayer and Affirmation. (For details on The Prayer and Affirmation, see page 10 of the **Standing Rules And Orders**). This Affirmation is silently done; and/or by silently making an Oath with So Help me God by those who subscribe to God, others have the choice not say that, and if they so choose, they cannot be forced. That is **secularism in practice**. But by **this Prayer**, what do we mean? What is the significance of the words we say every time we meet in this honorable House? Do we say these words as a recitation learnt by heart? Or do we mean what we say? Do we respect each other? Do we allow our deliberations to take place in the spirit of mutual trust? Do we as Leaders lead our country on the Path of Peace? Do we genuinely seek to find solution for **Issues and Problems** facing us? What do we **Think**? What do we **Do**? What do we **Say**? And by our public display, do we bring Honor to this Honorable House? Ponder on this, because we cannot be productive in the interest of the people in a rowdy, and unruly House.

Hon Speaker, Hon Members Ponder on these Questions, reflect on them and let them help us to improve our conduct in this august House subsequently. It is my sincere trust, that we shall bring Honor to this Honorable House.

- **It means we are a democratic and unitary State**, where the principles of democracy, the Rule of Law and Justice for all, must be jealously

guarded and upheld. We are a unitary State, i.e. a State run from the Centre as a Unit. We, are thus, not a Federal State.

In conclusion of the first section of my maiden speech, I would like to argue that it is from these above Key and Basic understanding of this Article 1(1) that the entire Constitution of the Republic of Namibia evolves.

### **The Genesis of the Genocide Discourse**

The second section deals with the Genesis of the Genocide Discourse, and I adopt a philosophical approach.

It took 100 years of lull before genocide was talked about at national level. It is true that the different people/tribes of Namibia found creative ways of keeping the historical narrative alive, and in their own stories of bravery, they kept their stories of gallantry through praise songs, folklore and folktales.

The Genesis of the Genocide Discourse, I would posit, can be likened to making a fire. As a young child I watched my father make fire in the village and until I was asked one day to do it, I did not realize that: **Making a Fire is an Art**. So, my dad had to teach me how to make a fire and he would start by collecting **very few pieces of wood** and gather few grasses and put it between them. Then he would strike the matches and light it. It took time for the fire to catch, but when it caught he would add more wood **in fact, heavier pieces of wood** than he had started with. As soon as the fire burned nicely and the flames flammable, as it were, we as a Family gathered around it to warm ourselves from the blistering winter. **And those who were not there from the beginning would hardly imagine how small it was**, when it was first started.

Hon Speaker, Hon Members that is why I am saying that the Genesis of the Genocide Discourse can be likened to making a fire. It has had a small beginning. Ponder on that.

The fire was started by the Late Paramount Chief Hon Dr. Kuaima Riruako when he organized the 100 years commemoration of the 1904 to 1908 Genocide. I was then a lecturer at the University of Namibia and I received an invitation from him to become one of the Directors of Ceremonies on that occasion and I gladly accepted, the other two Directors of Ceremonies were the Late Dr Mose Tjitendero and the Late Dr Zed Ngavirue. It is at this historic

event we hosted the German Minister of Economic Cooperation, Hon Heidemarie Wieczoreck-Zeul who said, and I quote

**the atrocities committed at the time would today be termed 'Genocide' and nowadays German Colonial Troops under General Lothar Von Trotha would be prosecuted and convicted. and she added**

**We Germans accept our historical and moral responsibilities and the injury caused by Germans at the time and so in the words of the Lord's Prayer, I ask you to forgive us for our trespasses.** (see page 40 of the motivation speech by the late Paramount Chief Hon Dr Riruako).

This was an attempt at an apology that soon went into a slumber.

For details on the Motion – The Genocide on Namibian People as motivated by Hon Dr. Riruako, refer to Debates of the National Assembly volume 94, of the 19 September 2006, Fourth Session, Fourth Parliament (13 September 2006 to 11 October 2006).

That was a day in August, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of 2004. And this day brought a deafening Awakening from the slumber when it was decided that the hundredth year of the Commemoration of the 1904 to 1908 Genocide be marked at Ohamakari, near Okakarara where the final onslaught took place. That was the beginning of the Making of the Fire, as per my earlier analogy. On this day, the 14th of August, 2004 approximately 10,000 Namibians gathered at Ohamakari to commemorate the hundredth Commemoration of the Genocide. They came in **solidarity and in numbers from all corners of Namibia with a sombre mind and in one accord.**

And in my view, that is the somberness that must be maintained as we deliberate on the JDD. Even the Second and Former President of the country H.E Dr. Hifikepunye L. Pohamba was in the audience, as the then Hon. Minister of Lands and Resettlement. All the late Chiefs; Chief Munjuku Nguvauva II, Chief Kambazembi; King Elifas Kauluma; Chief Afrikaner; Chief Maharero; Chief Zeraeua, to mention but a few were witnesses of this historic event. Hon. Dr. Paramount Chief Kuaima Riruako, later the mover of the Motion was there as the host. I had seen all the late chiefs, because, again, I was privileged to be the Director of Ceremonies at that significant and historic event. I was assisted by my co-Directors of Ceremonies, namely the late Dr. Mose Tjitendero and Dr. Zed Ngavirue.

In September 2006, that is two years after the 100<sup>th</sup> commemoration; And a year after H.E Hifikepunye Pohamba wrote the letter to the German chancellor Angela Morkel, on Hon Riruako introduced a Motion – Genocide of the Ovaherero and the Nama people. That motion was later refined to remove its initial tribal connotations and to be made to acquire a national character instead. I, Dr. Becky R. K. Ndjoze-Ojo (MP), and Deputy Minister of Education (2005-2010), was given the responsibility by the National Assembly to sit with the late Hon. Dr. Paramount Chief Kuaima Riruako to work on the language, the tone and intent of the motion to appeal to broader ownership beyond the Affected Communities, namely, the Ovaherero and the Namas who were specifically targeted by the Extermination Order of General Lothar von Trotha.

After editing, refinement through subtraction and additions as per the suggestions of the House. The 3/4 pink page became a full page and was brought back to be introduced by the late Hon. Dr. Paramount Chief Kuaima Riruako and, on the 19th of September 2006 he motivated the Motion- The Genocide on Namibian people. The extensive motivation can be found in the Hansard Volume 94 of the Fourth Session of the 4th Parliament of 13 September 2006 to 11 October 2006 (See for details)

This motivation culminated in elaborate debates and after that, the motivation was adapted as Parliamentary Resolution of 26 October 2006.

This is the Genesis (the beginning); of the Discourse (the discussions) of the Genocide (the brutal atrocities) at National level.

The Namibian of Wednesday 15 September 2021 writes:

“The National Assembly (NA) motion tabled for September 21, 2021 by the Minister of Defence and Veterans Affairs is now for genocide, apology and quantum. Therefore, no more discussions of reparations as per adopted resolution of 26 October 2006 of the National Assembly. It is really not shocking that Germany dictates to Namibia’s SWAPO-led government not to talk about reparations, but SWAPO’s betrayal of Namibians and especially those affected Communities is too much. Indeed, this is shameful betrayal.”

Hon Speaker, Hon. Members, we should not be seen to betray this cause, which we have initiated as a SWAPO-led Government, through the kind hearted, gentle giant of Namibia, H.E Dr. Hifikepunye L. Pohamba. He is the

one as the President of the SWAPO Party; and as the President of the Republic of Namibia having attentively listened and clearly perceived the atrocities as highlighted and talked about at the 100th Commemoration of the Genocide, which he attended in person, as the Minister of Lands and Resettlement in 2004. He came out with a clearer perception which he courageously and genuinely took up with the German Government by penning down the Letter to the German Chancellor Angela Merkel. In that Letter he raised the Genocide Issue as an unfinished business. After H.E. Pohamba became President in 2005, he gently and meticulously pursued this new unfinished business with the Germans. He took it upon himself as both the President of the Republic of Namibia and later as the President of the SWAPO Party. **Now who is the initiator?** Is it not the one who first wrote the Letter a year before we adopted the motion in 2006? It was the collective initiative of both late Hon Dr. Riruako and H.E Dr Pohamba. This motion was, the initiative of both of them.

The Second and Former President in his capacity as the President of the Republic of Namibia; and as the President of the SWAPO Party. These were all couched in his gentle giant personality. He was able to consult, to make concessions and convince the SWAPO Party 2/3 majority to support it. A two-thirds majority was needed if the motion was to be adopted as a Parliamentary Resolution of 26 October 2006 as has been done then.

So, this Motion in so adopted became a National Discourse with Legislative National character, and is thus collectively owned by all of us as a Family around the Fire. (My postulate above refers)

Following this Resolution, there were a number of obstacles identified, that were attempted to be handled diplomatically but the efforts produced limited results and there was a lull, for the next years, though Diplomacy was ongoing.

After the current Vice President, Hon. Nangolo Mbumba left office as the Hon.Minister of Education in 2010, he became the Secretary General of the SWAPO Party 2010 - 2015. And in 2015 and in consultations with the current President, H.E Dr Hage Geingob, he undertook a trip to Germany in the hope of a breakthrough. He took a delegation of three people including himself and the renown SWAPO Party historian Hon Ben Amandhila, and again, I was privileged to form part of this delegation in 2015. I was then a Member of Parliament. We started in the north of Germany and went to Bremen, because Bremen was a hub of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) The SDP politically supported and showed solidarity to the SWAPO Party in exile. We have had several productive meetings in Bremen then moved to Berlin. We met the German Minister of Foreign Affairs and he helped us to arrange some meetings

with other Ministers at the Bundestag. And the German Government refused to talk to Affected Communities directly except through their Government. We also had a follow-up meeting with the German Minister of Foreign Affairs and during that meeting we mapped the way forward. It was then agreed that each country can appoint a Special Envoy to revive the talks, and to start the complex negotiations that ensued over the period of 6 years to culminate in the Joint Declaration Document that was motivated by Hon Kapofi.

When we got to our hotel, the three of us met; Hon. Nangolo Mbumba, as the Secretary General of the SWAPO Party and Leader of the Delegation, Hon. Ben Amadhila as the renown SWAPO Party historian, and I, Dr. Becky R.K. Ndjoze-Ojo (MP) as part of this significant SG Delegation. We put our hearts and heads together, and I was requested to consolidate the key issues raised in the many meetings we attended at the Bundesdak and separately with the German Hon Minister of Foreign Affairs. The PA to the SG and I, put the draft Report together for scrutiny by the Senior members of the SG Delegation. The edited Report can be found at the SWAPO Party Office.

In addition, I was asked to help with the identifying of suitable candidates to be vetted for the would-be Namibia's Special Envoy on Genocide. Several names were brainstormed by the Delegation and I was asked to sieve through the names. In consultation, I developed a Log Frame with seven criteria as follows:

- 1) The candidate must come from the Affected Communities;**
- 2) The candidate must be versed in the history of the Genocide, preferably a historian of renown;**
- 3) The candidate must be a seasoned Diplomat, because such negotiations were anticipated to be complex and he needed to possess the Art of Diplomacy to negotiate, unravel, as it were, the labyrinth or maze of difficult negotiations;**
- 4) The candidate must be a humble Namibian, because haughtiness comes before the fall, and we did not want the negotiations to fall flat, due to arrogance;**
- 5) The candidate must be a proven academic, with the acumen to write academically sound reports, possibly a Ph.D holder;**
- 6) The candidate must be a seasoned Administrator and a prolific writer to write credible, well-researched and well-articulated reports, and**
- 7) The candidate, finally, must be a man with respectable personality, of quiet and calm demeanour, to present emotive, difficult reports with calmness**

The above 7 selection criteria were used to subject several would-be candidates from the Affected Communities, and the appointed Namibian Special Envoy, Dr. Zed Ngavirue met all the set criteria, and was recommended for the position. And H.E. President Dr. Hage G. Geingob, after further consultations appointed Dr. Zed Ngavirue as the Namibian Special Envoy on Genocide in 2016. And in all honesty, he had done an incredible job. He worked selflessly with commitment, dedication and sacrifice, crowning his requiem with the JDD, a Document that is subject to further consultations and deliberations particularly, as touching the inadequacy of the Quantum.

## **Tribute**

Finally, this maiden speech pays tribute to the living and the dead.

**Firstly**, I pay tribute to the thousands of the many victims of the Genocide of 1904 -1908, who were subjected to unimaginable brutality, atrocities and death. Amongst them were many of my maternal uncles (The Kangirues; The Kahaamas; The Musaonas), and many others who fought with gallantry. May their Souls Rest.

Hon Speaker, Hon Members, very often we like to talk endlessly about people, after they have died. The Ovaherero have an adage: **Taa Usuverue**, meaning: Die so that you become the beloved.

Today I wish to argue that, we need not wait until one dies before they become our beloved. Thereto, I wish to pay tribute to the Founding President and father of the Namibian Nation Dr. Sam S Nujoma for mobilizing young Namibians to fight for our Liberation, and for us to gain independence as a Sovereign State. It was his Life and his Time to do so, and we should remain grateful for his sacrifices.

**Secondly**, and with particular reference to the Motion on Genocide on Namibian People, I wish to acknowledge and pay tribute to the Second and Former President H.E Dr Hifikepunye Pohamba whom I refer to as the gentle giant. He helped the Late **Hon Dr Riruako to lit the fire of Genocide Discourse** by becoming one of the initial pieces of wood that ignited the fire (my earlier analogy of Making a Fire as an Art, refers), and I pay special tribute to him for the role he has played in making this an internationally recognized Discourse.



**Thirdly**, I pay tribute to all those who in their own little and passionate ways contributed to the success of what we are witnessing today. Thereto, allow me to pay tribute to those who have gone before us, notably amongst them Paramount Chief Dr. Riruako, Chief Karaerua Nguvauva, Dr. Ngavirue, Dr Tjitendero, Dr Tjiriange, Adv Rukoro, Hon Kazenambo, Chief Afrikaners of the Namas, and many others. May their contributions be remembered, and add value. May their Souls Rest in Eternal Peace.

Hon Speaker, Hon Members, last but not least may I pay tribute to Late Veno Kauaria. I met late Veno when she was 6 years old and I was 10yrs in 1966 in Windhoek Old Location, and since then we have not parted ways until her untimely death. We had known each other for the past 55 years, before her passing and we remained close relatives, friends and colleagues as we worked together, and variously in the **Education Landscape of Namibia**. May her beautiful Soul Rest in Eternal Peace.

**I thank you**