

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



STATEMENT BY
HIS EXCELLENCY DR HAGE G. GEINGOB,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 5th SESSION OF THE 7TH PARLIAMENT

FEBRUARY 8, 2021

WINDHOEK (Virtual)

Check against delivery

- Speaker of the National Assembly, Honorable Professor Peter Katjavivi;
- Chairperson of the National Council, Honorable Lukas Sinimbo Muha;
- Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia and Leader of Government Business in the House, Right Honorable Saara Kuugongelwa–Amadhila;
- Leader of the official opposition, Honorable McHenry Venaani;
- Honorable Members of Parliament;
- Vice President of the Republic of Namibia, Comrade Nangolo Mbumba;
- Your Lordship Peter Shivute, Chief Justice;
- Your Lordship Petrus Damaseb, Deputy Chief Justice;
- Hon. Judges and other Members of the Judiciary;
- Ladies and Gentlemen

At the outset, I wish to thank you Honourable Speaker, for having invited me to officially open the 5th Session of the 7th Parliament to commence the Legislative year 2022.

Without further ado, let me come to the task for which you have invited me for by pointing out the following Bills, which are up for tabling during the Course of the year. These are:

- 1. Combating of Rape Amendment Bill**
- 2. Combating of Domestic Violence Amendment Bill**
- 3. Criminal Procedure Amendment Bill**
- 4. High Court Amendment Bill**
- 5. Magistrates Court amendment Bill**
- 6. Divorce Bill**
- 7. Torture Bill**
- 8. Obsolete laws Bill**

- 9. Ombudsman Bill
- 10. Child Justice Bill
- 11. Marriage Bill
- 12. Uniform Marriages Bill
- 13. Banking Institutions Amendment Bill
- 14. Metrology Bill

I will highlight some of the key ones as follows:

The Combating of Rape Amendment Bill will greatly assist in combating, curbing and eliminating the incidences of rape to safeguard our innocent women and children from this evil committed by criminally minded citizens. The incidences of rape must not only be severely reduced but must be totally eradicated from the Namibian society because this vile crime is a scourge which demeans and violates the dignity of our people. Hence, perpetrators should receive the heaviest punishment under our laws to deter them from committing this evil.

Similarly, the passing of the *Combating of Domestic Violence Amendment Bill* is to stamp out the high cases of gender based violence against which the Namibian society has been crying out for over 30 years.

We hope that this will tighten the loopholes and enable easier reporting, investigation and punishment of gender based violence cases. This bill should serve as a serious reminder to offenders and would be offenders that gender based violence is a taboo in the Republic of Namibia, punishable through heavy prison sentences.

We are all aware that when it comes to rape and domestic violence, our men are the biggest offenders. Therefore, women are no longer viewed as second class citizens who are expected to be obedient and subservient to their husbands. Let's just accept that times have changed and that men and women are now viewed as equal partners.

It is also a sad reality that while men are drinking in bars, women are progressing socially, academically and economically. When one attends graduation ceremonies, one sees more girls than boys. When one attends church, like I do, one sees more girls in church than boys. This trend is starting to show in the corporate world where women are starting to occupy higher positions. Some may even be higher earners than their husbands. This can frustrate a male chauvinist who may display “frustration aggression” such as beatings and even killings.

I appeal to my fellow men. Let us become exemplary husbands, fathers and the protectors of our families. Let’s turn a new leaf in this year – the Year of Reimaging.

I now move on to the Divorce Bill which will make it easier for couples to divorce. As it stands, one can only divorce if one can prove that adultery or indiscretion has taken place. With the new bill, if two married persons have reached irreconcilable differences, they will be able to divorce. Hopefully this contributes to reducing violence as well. However, we are not encouraging divorce.

On a more positive note, the Marriage Bill will ensure that couples wedded north of the redline will be given an opportunity to change their marriage status on whether they will be married out or in community of property. Currently, marriages north of the red line are automatically classified as out of community of property.

This creates problems during divorce or when dealing with the estate on the death of a spouse.

Honourable Speaker,

Next month, we will be celebrating 32 years of independence. Having fought a bitter struggle to liberate our country from Apartheid colonialism, we should no longer accommodate or tolerate laws in Namibia that are racist or discriminatory in nature. Therefore, I am pleased that the Obsolete Laws Bill will provide for the repeal of certain obsolete laws many of which are discriminatory on the grounds of gender,

race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed as well as social and economic status. There is no place for such laws in the Namibian House.

Finally, the Torture Bill originates from the bitter historical experiences of the majority of our citizens under the colonial apartheid administration which had subjected them to physical torture. This bill will give expression to the aspirations of the Namibian Constitution to maintain the dignity of every Namibian citizen as sacrosanct, by outlawing the practice of State sanctioned torture and physical abuse of citizens. Its promulgation will forever put to rest the ghost of State sanctioned torture in Namibia.

While these Bills aim to transform our socio-economic architecture, I must state Comrade Speaker that I have noted that a majority of these Bills are recurring from the previous year. This could be attributable to the situation of COVID-19.

Notwithstanding the COVID-19 independent intervening variable, going forward, many of these Bills are essential to address pressing problems in our society. For this reason, we have to redouble our efforts to dispense with them as quickly as possible if we aim to truly make a difference in the lives of our people. Let us not delay progress but rather, let us all strive to work tirelessly to become catalysts for peace, safety, economic development and prosperity.

Once again, Comrade Speaker, and honorable members of Parliament, I would like to thank you for the honor afforded to me to officially open the 5th Session of the 7th Parliament.

Let us remain focused on the primary task of giving our nation hope through this august house as we address their concerns effectively.

Let us set an example in this Parliament of a united and dedicated people with a will and determination to positively transform the nation.

With these words, it is now my honor to declare the 5th Session of the 7th Parliament officially open. May God bless you all and may God bless the Republic of Namibia.

I thank you.