

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS
BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. HAGE G. GEINGOB,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

**WINDHOEK
PARLIAMENT**

March 16, 2023

Check against delivery

- **Honourable Professor Peter Katjavivi, Speaker of the National Assembly;**
- **Hon. Lukas Sinimbo Muha, Chairperson of the National Council;**
- **Right Honourable Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, Prime Minister and Leader of Government Business in Parliament;**
- **Honourable McHenry Venaani, Leader of the Official Opposition; and the Leaders of other Political Parties represented in Parliament;**
- **Honourable Members of Parliament;**

Special Guests:

- **Comrade Nangolo Mbumba, Vice President of the Republic of Namibia;**
- **Madame Monica Geingos, First Lady of the Republic of Namibia;**
- **Diplomatic Corps;**
- **Members of the Media;**

Honourable Speaker, Fellow Namibians,

It is with a sense of pride and honour that I stand before you in this August House to deliver my penultimate State of the Nation Address to the people of Namibia through this August House. In less than a week from today, we will celebrate our 33rd Independence Anniversary and I am grateful that after 3 decades, our nation still stands strong, stands united and stands ready to revive its fortunes, having overcome unprecedented headwinds.

I thank you Honourable Speaker, for having invited me as is required by Article 32 (2) of the Constitution, to address Parliament on the state of the nation.

Fellow Namibians,

Our economic trajectory indicates that Namibia has entered a period of revival, with green shoots on the horizon. I have the utmost confidence that to

achieve economic emancipation for all, Namibia must be propelled forward by the collective efforts of the citizens. The success of our country does not depend on one singular person but on each and every citizen. Therefore, each and every son and daughter of our soil must become a catalyst, for development and change.

As a leader I can dream and point towards the direction of prosperity, but it is up to all of us as a collective, to actualize these dreams and manifest them into reality because a nation's success can only be achieved when its people are united behind a common purpose.

I am confident that all of us in this August House and in this country, possess within us the confidence, conviction, and devotion to make a difference in the lives of our fellow countrymen and women. I am confident that we possess the qualities and capabilities to propel Namibia forward in this modern era of human advancement. I am confident that we have stood firm through the worst and have turned a corner, towards better days. We have survived the turbulent headwinds, we have circumvented the rough tides and now, we stand ready to forge ahead and revive the Namibian economy, by continuing our drive towards shared prosperity.

Owing to my firm belief in our ability as a nation to restore our fortunes, I termed this year the Year of Revival. Revival is defined as the improvement in the strength and condition of a particular thing or a restoration to life, consciousness and vigour.

Thus, as we deliberate on the state of our nation, we contemplate on how to improve our living conditions, strengthen our resilience to withstand external shocks and revive our economic fortunes, so that the people of Namibia, can once more look upon the horizon with a sense of hope and optimism.

Let me now proceed to outline and report on the concrete actions that we have taken and are planning to take, as a means of ensuring that this, will truly be, the Year of Revival.

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Honourable Speaker, Fellow Namibians,

The Effective Governance pillar consists of five key deliverables, namely:

- 1. Accountability & Transparency**
- 2. Improved Performance & Service Delivery**
- 3. Enhanced Citizen Participation & Engagement**
- 4. Enhancing Security & Rule of Law; and**
- 5. Strengthening National Anti-Corruption Mechanisms**

From the onset of independence, the SWAPO led Government has placed a high premium on effectively overseeing the governance and development of the Republic of Namibia. We are aware that with time, new challenges arise and new ways of doing things are discovered. That is why through the Harambee Prosperity Plan II, we have outlined focus areas aimed at buttressing our Governance Architecture and thereby making the governance of Namibia, more effective.

Effective Governance is critical for socio-economic development and social cohesion.

In addition, our governance architecture is the mortar that holds our society together. It is built on a solid foundation of robust processes, systems and institutions that are accountable and *transparent, as key drivers for inclusive growth and* improved quality of life. These processes and systems, underpinned by the rule of law and respect for human rights, are at the centre of our developmental agenda.

With this in mind, when we crafted the Harambee Prosperity Plan (HPPII), we recognized the need to continue augmenting institutional capacity and improving service delivery.

As the implementing agents of Government, public servants play an instrumental role in effective service delivery of critical services such as education, health and the public good, through efficient use of allocated resources in response to people's needs.

Improved Performance & Service Delivery

To facilitate efficient and effective service delivery, government has implemented a Performance Management System (PMS), which plays an important role in planning, decision-making and performance evaluation. The PMS instils particular principles, norms and values that underpin successful implementation of the government agenda.

In this respect, the Office of the Prime Minister has made good progress with the ongoing review of the Performance Management System. The Performance Management Policy has been revised, while the process to acquire an automated PMS is about to be concluded, pending finalization of the technical design. A 'whole of government approach' which has been

adopted and roll out to Regional Councils, Local Authorities and Public Enterprises is expected to be completed during the HPPII period.

In addition, adherence to customer service charters has become a key threshold requirement for prompt service delivery. I am pleased to inform this House that Namibia is seen as one of the leading nations on the implementation of the Customer Service Charters and has been chosen for assessment by the African Union Commission (AUC) along with four other countries, namely Tanzania, South Africa, Kenya and Morocco. Namibia's Self-Assessment Report has been drafted following inclusive nationwide consultations and submitted to the AUC in January 2023. The report has been published online via e-service (www.eservice.gov.na) and the Office of the Prime Minister (www.opm.gov.na).

Through Business Process Re-engineering, Government is embracing technology as an enabler to reap administrative efficiencies and bring services closer to the People. This approach has already begun yielding results as there has been a significant improvement in the processing times of national documents. In this regard, I am proud to report the introduction of online work-visas and passport applications through the Ministry of Home Affairs, where all relevant forms can now be completed, uploaded and even payments effected online. All these reforms will result in shorter queues and overall improved public service delivery.

Enhancing Security & Rule of Law

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Chairperson,

Peace and security are not only essential for harmonious existence and nation building, but are also prerequisites for establishing a conducive environment for economic recovery and inclusive growth. It is for this reason that Government has prioritized peace and stability throughout the past thirty-three years.

Furthermore, Government regards defense and national security as instruments for guaranteeing the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Namibia. Consequently, the Namibian Defense Force (NDF) continues to conduct regular coordinated patrols, inspections and verifications, especially along the Namibian borders, including on land and sea.

Similarly, the Namibian Police participated in several crime prevention and anti-poaching operations throughout the country. We are cognizant that more needs to be done in this regard, but as mentioned earlier, success does not depend on one person or institution.

Fellow Namibians,

While we have well formulated national policies and development plans, their full implementation remains a challenge. Hence, the National Planning Commission in collaboration with NIPAM, and the European Union has developed two capacity building courses on Monitoring & Evaluation methods and practices. The purpose of these courses is to contribute towards a culture of high performance, project management and accountability.

Despite challenges encountered during the period under review, including limited financial resources, Government has made significant strides in buttressing our governance architecture and maintaining an enabling policy and legislative environment to support participatory democracy. During this year, we will continue with the reforms aimed at strengthening our institutional capacity for our growing democracy, as outlined in HPPII.

Accountability & Transparency

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Chairperson,

The cornerstone of democracy lies in the active participation of citizens in the governance of their nation, including the ability to hold elected leaders accountable. Transparency in government operations is thus not a privilege but a fundamental right of the people. Only through open and honest communication can trust be established between the government and the people, who are the ultimate sovereigns. As I have often stated, Accountability plus Transparency equals Trust (A+T=Tr).

Given that the inculcation of accountability and transparency within our Governance Architecture requires political will by all, I have taken the responsibility as Head of State, to lead by example. It is why in 2015, the First Lady and I contracted PriceWaterHouseCoopers to account and verify our assets, properties and finances. After which we jointly issued a voluntary public declaration.

Furthermore, as part of our endeavours to improve accountability, transparency and create an enabling environment, Government undertook to enact key policy and legislative frameworks.

During the period under review, several policies and laws were adopted or enacted, including:

- **The Access to Information Act which amongst others, seeks to provide access to information held by public and private entities; and**
- **The National Sustainable Special Economic Zones Policy, which seeks to ensure the diversification of the economy and our ambitions for structural transformation.**

The others are listed in the booklet provided to you.

Strengthening National Anti-Corruption Mechanisms

Fellow Namibians,

Our pursuit of economic recovery and inclusive growth in Namibia rests upon the implementation of robust anti-corruption measures across all institutions in the public and private sectors. Namibia's anti-corruption efforts were set in motion upon attainment of our independence in 1990. It was in this context that the Ad Hoc Cabinet Committee on the Promotion of Ethics and Combating of Corruption was set up on 05 March 1997, to oversee a national consultative process to define corruption and develop home-grown mechanisms to tackle it.

This process was followed by a National Consultative Conference in October 1998, where several recommendations were formulated, one being that a national anti-corruption agency be established. These initiatives eventually led to the passing of the Anti-Corruption Act of 2003 that established the Anti-Corruption Commission.

One of the top priorities during the period under review was to strengthen our anti-corruption mechanisms to effectively respond to corruption.

The approval of the Second National Anti-Corruption Strategy and Action Plan (2022 – 2025) therefore stands as a notable milestone, highlighting the country's commitment to combating corruption.

To demonstrate our firm commitment towards tackling corruption in Namibia, in 2018, when I received news of disturbing allegations mainly directed at some Ministries and Offices, I took immediate action.

I decided to address the situation knowing that serious reputational damage was done to the ability of such Ministries and Offices to effectively execute their constitutional and statutory mandates. In this regard, my actions were three-pronged: Firstly, I requested the accused Ministers to respond to the allegations; secondly, I submitted the written rebuttals of the Ministers to the Anti-Corruption Commission for scrutiny and investigation, where warranted and finally, I transferred those Ministers in order to enable any subsequent investigation to take place without interference or the possibility thereof. Concerning the Fishrot case, since the matter is in the court, I cannot comment on it.

ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Chairperson,

The Economic Advancement pillar consists of three key deliverables, namely:

- 1. Optimizing the stewardship of our Natural Resources and Public Assets;**
- 2. Enhancing productivity of Priority Economic sectors; and**
- 3. Developing Complementary Engines of growth.**

Former Spanish Prime Minister José María Aznar once said that, "Without economic development, any potential for political openness and freedom will be questionable." As a Government, we understand that peace and stability

in Namibia can only be maintained by ensuring that we all participate in the economic development of our country, to attain equitable distribution of resources.

At present, the global economy is facing several challenges due to persistent and broadening inflationary pressures, geopolitical tensions in Europe, and the economic slowdown in China. The Russia/Ukraine conflict has resulted in price shocks for food, oil and gas. As a result, global growth has slowed down in 2022 and is expected to remain subdued in 2023. However, Namibia's domestic economy has demonstrated resilience, registering a better-than-expected growth of 4 percent last year, with expectation for further forecasted growth of 3.2 percent this year.

The return of the economy to a positive growth trajectory is welcome, as it brings much needed growth in revenue collections as well as stemming the trend of declining per capita income.

Furthermore, Namibia attracted foreign direct investment worth 13.2 billion Namibian Dollars or 7.2 percent of GDP during the first nine months of 2022, primarily driven by equity injections for exploration activities following the offshore oil discoveries. This was the highest year-on-year growth we witnessed since 2015. These financial inflows are running at a record high, with foreign direct investment being the main contributor. Indeed, these green shoots are undeniable.

It is expected that high FDI inflows are likely to continue in 2023 on the back of oil discovery appraisals, coupled with the commencement of the green hydrogen project feasibility study to the tune of 2,5 billion Namibian Dollars. This demonstrates growing investor confidence in Namibia.

Nevertheless, there is still a need to foster broad-based economic growth across all sectors of the economy. Thus, Government will continue to expedite implementation of supportive supply-side policies to lessen constraints to economic activities and facilitate the ease of doing business.

Some have asked what plans are in place to address the high cost of living and inflation for low-income earners? The doubling of the minimum tax threshold from 50,000 to 100,000 Namibian Dollars and the gradual reduction of the corporate tax rate from 32 percent to 30 percent are some of the responses Government is taking to provide relief to many of our low-income earners.

Despite progress made, financial exclusion remains a challenge in rural areas, the informal sector and for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Therefore, the Bank of Namibia is currently coordinating the development of a new Financial Sector Transformation Strategy to achieve a higher degree of financial inclusion.

Optimizing stewardship of our Natural Resources & Public Assets

Fellow Namibians,

In May 2022, we launched the Welwitschia Fund, our first Sovereign Wealth Fund which aims to enhance national resilience and promote intergenerational prosperity, through redistribution of benefits from our natural resource endowments. The Fund received 300 million Namibian Dollars seed capital from the Government and the Bank of Namibia. Furthermore, the Fund will be managed by the Bank of Namibia while legislation to govern its operation, including the capitalization of the Fund, is being put in place. This is a milestone that all Namibians should be proud of.

The Government is committed to the reform of Public Enterprises, including the commissioning of the Centralized Ownership Model and the establishment of a Holding Company structure. Hence, the Namibian Public Enterprises Board Recruitment Guidelines have augmented the process of appointment of qualified and experienced Board Members without political interference.

Enhancing productivity of Priority Economic sectors

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Chairperson,

I am pleased to report that the Government has made significant progress in enhancing the productivity of priority economic sectors. During the period under review, we established a Business Rescue Task Force to study our insolvency laws and recommend amendments to support efficient recovery for companies in financial distress. The Task Force carried out extensive research and consultations with experts in both the public and private sectors. The report outlining 23 recommendations and a preliminary Implementation Plan was submitted and approved by the Cabinet in August 2022. Subsequently, the implementation of these recommendations has begun.

In addition, after a country assessment to determine our readiness for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, we hosted in June 2022, the first Namibia 4IR Conference, where the public also provided inputs. The report and its 13 recommendations were approved by Cabinet in November 2022, and implementation modalities are being finalized.

At this juncture, I wish to commend the Chairperson of the Task Force Professor Anicia Peters, as well as the rest of the team, including Professor Marwala, for their sterling work. We also congratulate Prof. Marwala on his appointment as the Rector of the United Nations University.

In identifying strategies for unlocking e-commerce in Namibia, the Task Force advised positioning Namibia as a commercial jurisdiction of choice for International Payment Providers such as PayPal. This will enable our creative industries and many young people, to access payments from digital platforms such as YouTube and Amazon locally.

To realize this, the Ministry of Information & Communication Technology, Namibia Investment Promotion & Development Board and the Bank of Namibia, should sensitise local entrepreneurs on the locally available options, while working with relevant stakeholders to resolve e-commerce hurdles.

Moreover, we continue to implement the SME financing strategy as a vehicle to stimulate economic growth and employment creation. Consequently, an amount of 40 million Namibian Dollars was applied for through commercial banks by the end of September 2022. The Development Bank of Namibia approved 13.3 million Namibian Dollars to support six sectors, sustaining 35 SMEs and creating 247 jobs across nine regions. Additionally, the Ministry of Finance and Public Enterprises transferred 8.5 million Namibian Dollars to the Development Bank of Namibia to roll out the Mentorship and Coaching Programme. Furthermore, we launched an Application as a central repository for micro, small and medium enterprises to list their goods and services, and encourage digitalization. To date 791 small businesses are listed on the database.

Developing complementary engines of growth

Fellow Namibians,

Efforts to develop complementary engines of growth, have begun to bear fruit, towards creating new avenues to diversify our primary sector focused economy. Namibia has pioneered a billion-dollar green hydrogen valley concept in sub-Saharan Africa, attracting in the process, over 1.5 billion Namibian Dollars in grant funding, during the period under review.

As a result, I urge the Green Hydrogen Council to deliver on its promise of finalizing the Implementation Agreement without delay.

The grants received are yielding positive impacts. Towards the end of this month, we will announce 93 Namibians who will receive scholarships worth more than 34 million Namibian Dollars to pursue their Masters and TVET studies in areas related to the Synthetic Fuels industry. Of the 4 pilot projects earmarked to receive more than 500 million Namibian Dollars in grant funding to develop their concepts, more than 120 million Namibian Dollars has been allocated to the Daures Project, of which 37 million has been drawn down. Project construction will commence this year. The Hyphen project in the //Kharas region will commence with a feasibility study and we expect construction of at least 3 other green hydrogen projects in the Erongo region to begin in 2023. During the period under review, we also approved the final draft of the Marine Spatial Plan, which will soon be disseminated by the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources. These efforts demonstrate our commitment to building robust green and blue economies in Namibia.

Namibia has long aspired to industrialize and achieve the goals of Vision 2030. Given our world class renewable energy endowment and the global carbon neutrality goals, Namibia is presented with an unparalleled opportunity to achieve our industrial ambitions.

This year the Ministries of Mines & Energy, and Industrialization & Trade, will conduct feasibility studies to explore the possibility of using low-cost renewable energy from the envisaged hydrogen industry, with the objective of creating a green manufacturing hub anchored by gigawatt installations (1000 Mega Watts). We will investigate the possibility of using the industrial parks in Walvis Bay to accommodate these Green industrial projects.

Given Namibia's abundant critical mineral deposits that are needed for the energy transition, such as lithium and rare earths, the Government will explore the possibility of using this low-cost green energy to add value to our raw materials. This includes the possibility of refining iron ore in Namibia, as we look to establish a billion-dollar iron ore processing facility. This is one outcome of the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the European Union during COP27 in Egypt last year.

Using our abundant renewable energy as a means of establishing local industry will require the right mix of incentives and an attractive investment ecosystem. The Ministry of Finance, the Namibia Investment Promotion & Development Board and the Ministry of Industrialization and Trade will finalize the 'Impactful Investments Incentive Scheme' before the end of this year. This scheme is critical to diversifying our economy, unlocking more private sector investments and creating gainful employment opportunities. The Namibia Investment Promotion & Development Board is working with the Ministry of Home Affairs to formulate a targeted Golden VISA programme to

incentivise and attract investors with skills, capital and ambitions to set up businesses and residency in Namibia.

Moreover, we are observing heightened activity in the trading of exclusive prospecting licenses and interest to develop associated mining assets, especially in the Lithium subsector.

While we welcome the interest in Namibia's mineral potential, we remind investors, both local and foreign, that Namibia is a jurisdiction that upholds the rule of law. Therefore, actions that are deemed to be in contravention of the laws, will be dealt with accordingly.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Chairperson,

During the past several months, there has been much speculation and discussion centred on the discovery of oil in Namibia. It is therefore pertinent that I inform the nation on this matter. I am pleased to confirm that a discovery of light oil has been made within the Orange Basin offshore Namibia. Shell Namibia Upstream BV in joint venture with Qatar Oil, have further drilled a second well, which is termed an appraisal well, to establish the quality and the extent of the reservoir. These discoveries are driving renewed interest in oil and gas exploration off the coast of Namibia.

We also confirm that a further discovery of light oil with associated gas has been made in the Orange Basin by Total Energies. A comprehensive coring and logging programme designed to assess the commerciality of this discovery has been completed. Total Energies has started the preparation of appraisal operations, to drill two approved wells. This will also determine the extent and commerciality of the discovery.

Namibia is endowed with an unprecedented portfolio of opportunities to deepen and diversify our economic potential. We intend to move with lightning speed to capitalize on these endowments in a coordinated manner, in recognition of the urgent need to create more new jobs.

SOCIAL PROGRESSION

Fellow Namibians,

The Social Progression pillar consists of five key deliverables, namely:

- 1. Arresting Hunger Poverty;**
- 2. Delivery of Urban Land, Housing & Sanitation;**
- 3. Improved Quality of Public Education System;**
- 4. Improved Access to Public Healthcare; and**
- 5. Arresting Sexual & Gender Based Violence.**

The 32nd President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt once said, "The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much, it is whether we provide enough for those who have little."

The idea espoused by President Roosevelt can be juxtaposed with the Marxist dictum, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need."

As a Government, we are cognizant that the Namibian society remains unequal. My declaration of all-out war against poverty and inequalities upon assuming Office in 2015, and the subsequent single-minded goal of eradicating poverty in Namibia, has been inspired by this reality.

This ideal remains our greatest motivating force as a Government. Several notable achievements can be reported to ensure Namibia achieves a measure of household and national food security and records zero deaths from hunger, including the following:

- 1. To unlock the potential of the Green Schemes through alternative modes of operation, the Government advertised seven Green Schemes for leasing. Evaluations to identify suitable operators are ongoing.**
- 2. The Namibia Agriculture Mechanization and Seed Implement Programme (NAMSIP) procured various machinery and equipment for use by crop and livestock farmers. These have been distributed to the Agricultural Development Centres (ADCs) where farmers are able to access them for farming operations.**
- 3. In addition, the Government through NAMSIP supported the production of 1,060 tons and 117 tons of certified and foundation seeds. The Agricultural sector is the largest employer of young Namibians and through the multiplication of seed related activities, temporary employment was created for 4,519 people.**

Further details on Goal 1 achievements are listed in the booklet on your desks.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Chairperson,

Improving child nutrition is a long-term investment in human capital, which has a triple dividend for the children of today, the adults of tomorrow and the future generation. While our country has made progress in reducing stunting in children - stunting remains high. It is for this reason that the Namibian Government remains focused on Food and Nutritional Security related interventions.

In recognition of the rising cost of living, the old age social grant has been increased four times, from the initial amount of 600 Namibian Dollars in 2015 to the current grant of 1,400 Namibian Dollars. This grant has a proven overall positive impact in stemming poverty, among poorer families across our country. Coverage for this grant stands at 97 percent of beneficiaries in 2023.

Government also administers a number of other grants in our multipronged approach to arresting poverty. These include:

- Grants to orphans and vulnerable children, which will be increased from 250 Namibian Dollars per month to 350 Namibian Dollars this year 2023;**
- Grants to people with disabilities, which have increased in value from the initial 250 Namibian Dollars to the current 1,400 Namibian Dollars per month;**
- To mitigate hunger poverty and reduce transactional costs, the Food Bank was converted in April 2022 into a monthly cash transfer amount, to phase in a Conditional Basic Income Grant with monthly payments of 600 Namibian Dollars;**
- Grants to war veterans amounted to 871 million Namibian Dollars per annum;**
- In 2022, the Government spent 104 million Namibian Dollars on the national school feeding programme, reaching 320 000 school going children at primary and secondary schools.**

The above-mentioned means more than thirty percent of the total population receives a Government grant in one form or another, which translates to approximately 620,000 individuals, not considering the multiplier effect of beneficiaries per household. This naturally presents a long-term challenge, as it will not be sustainable for so many of our people to depend on Government support for their livelihood. For this reason, the fight against poverty must be

responded to using multifaceted strategies, including engendering job creation through new, complementary engines of growth.

Delivery of Urban Land, Housing & Sanitation

Fellow Namibians,

The Namibian Constitution guarantees the free movement of people throughout the country and we cannot stop this, because these are the very freedoms that Namibians fought for. Thus, the solution is to take the “bright lights” of development, to the regions and stimulate the rural economies.

In this regard, the Flexible Land Tenure System (FLTS) is being implemented to provide affordable security of tenure to inhabitants in informal settlements, through the creation of cheaper and alternative land tenure options, which can be upgraded to Freehold title. These upgradeable titles provide security for persons who live in informal settlements, empowering them to hold and occupy land without fear of being evicted and enabling them to access credit for investment and development purposes.

In addition, Government plans to implement the upgrading of settlements in Oranjemund, Kamanjab, Outjo, Gochas, Maltahohe, Walvis Bay, Ongwediva, Katima Mulilo, Tsumeb and Grootfontein.

In addition, a number of achievements have been recorded with regard to land, housing and sanitation during the period:

- 1. A total of 21 townships were proclaimed and 528 housing units have been constructed from April 2022, to date;**

- 2. To address the use of the unhygienic bucket toilet system, Government has to date abolished 366 bucket toilets by constructing 250 flush toilets in Kalkfeld, Otjozondjupa Region and 116 flush toilets in Fransfontein, Kunene Region. Furthermore, Government provided 1.7 million Namibian Dollars to the Katima Mulilo, Rundu and Otavi local authorities, to address sewerage challenges. Thirteen (13) ablution facilities have been constructed through the Community Led Total Sanitation programme in Kunene Region, while 175 new sanitation facilities were constructed in Zambezi, Hardap, Omusati, Oshikoto and Oshana regions, respectively.**

To improve access to safe drinking water for human consumption and agriculture use, a number of boreholes and pipelines were repaired and installed in the Oshana, Oshikoto, Kavango East and //Kharas regions, as detailed in the printed booklet.

Improved Quality of Public Education System

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Chairperson,

In the education sector, National Education Statistics depict a steady increase in learner enrolments of 82 percent over the past 3 decades. Over the same period (1992–2022) the number of schools constructed increased by 32 percent. Teaching staff have also increased over the period, by 106 percent.

As a parent and a former teacher, I consider improving access to quality education the cornerstone for our development because, “education is the greatest equalizer.” I believe that it is through education, that the son of a

farmworker can become the President of a country, and the daughter of a domestic assistant can become a medical doctor.

While significant progress has been registered over the years in the area of access to education for the Namibian child, the poor learning and teaching outcomes with high failure rates, is most worrying to both Government and citizens. High failure rates lead to high repetition rates and a significant cost burden to the government, while undermining overall societal progression.

On the issue of student financing, during my 2022 Address, I announced amnesty on interest payments for student loans with the Namibia Student Financial Assistance Fund (NSFAF) and directed that the two Ministers of Higher Education and Finance work out the implementation modalities. This has resulted in the waiving of about 2.3 billion Namibian Dollars in interest debts, from all past and present student loans. A positive response was received from students and 14 million Namibian Dollars has been recovered this financial year, an improvement from the previous average of 4 million annual recovery rate. The amnesty will therefore continue until June 30, 2023.

To respond to the challenge of unemployment, the Namibia Correctional Services has commenced the process of recruiting 300 new intakes, while the Namibian Police will recruit an additional 1,000 intakes in 2023, which will significantly relieve the human resource constraints being experienced in the police force. Furthermore the Namibia Defense Force has recruited 1,470 intakes during 2022 and has made provision to recruit an additional 1,500 new intakes for the year 2023.

In an effort to bridge the 'Skills Gap' and prepare the 'Jobs of the Future', the University of Namibia (UNAM) has established the Green Hydrogen Research

Institute to respond to the urgent need for high level expertise, laboratory and other scientific infrastructures required to deliver clean energy sources.

I reiterate the Government's commitment to driving reforms towards transforming our education sector. This Financial Year the Government allocated 20.6 billion Namibian Dollars or 24 percent of public expenditure towards the Education Sector, from which 200 million is for the recruitment of new teachers.

This is why, through project financing, I directed in 2017 for the Ministry of Education, Arts & Culture to implement the 'Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Improvement Programme,' which secured 1 billion Namibian Dollar funding from the African Development Bank. This Programme is ongoing with renovations and upgrading of 22 schools; one National Library; 2 Vocational Training Centres and construction of a new VTC at Keetmanshoop and a Veterinary Teaching Hospital at UNAM.

Several other infrastructures have been delivered during the period, as detailed in the SONA booklet.

In the area of Sports development, there are many examples to draw from, where men and women have risen from abject poverty to stardom and wealth. It is therefore important to ensure appropriate supportive infrastructure, administration and services are in place, as a means of providing a conducive environment for our young, gifted and budding sporting stars to achieve success.

We are cognizant of the fact that the state of our sports and recreation facilities and the governance of some of our Sporting Codes are not at the expected level. Thus, the Ministry of Sport, Youth & National Service has

commissioned a "Facility Audit" to renovate and upgrade the Independence Stadium in Windhoek, and the Sports stadiums in Swakopmund and Oshakati. This is done in anticipation of Namibia winning the Bid to co-host the 2027 African Cup of Nations, alongside Botswana.

We also do this with a sense of duty, to ensure that players representing our national football team, the Brave Warriors, are able to train and play on home ground. The current situation where our national team must always travel elsewhere to practice and play their matches because of sub-standard facilities, is regrettable and will be rectified without delay.

Improved Access to Public Healthcare

Fellow Namibians,

It has been said that, "Healthy citizens are the greatest assets any country can have."

I am sure no one in this august House disagrees with this notion. The first four Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) of Ending Poverty and Hunger, and ensuring access to Health and Education for All, are inter-dependent. The attainment of our national and global goals depends primarily on maintaining "healthy minds, in healthy bodies".

Government spends close to 20 percent of its budget on the public health system, which serves 80 percent of the total population. To this end, the Universal Health Coverage policy that is being developed aims to ensure all people have access to quality health care services without constraint.

Significant milestones have been achieved in improving access to public healthcare and you may refer to your 2023 SONA booklet for the details.

Furthermore, the development of a new 300-bed Khomas District Hospital to relieve congestion in the regional Katutura and Central Intermediate Hospitals is planned to commence this year.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Chairperson,

The Infrastructure Development pillar consists of four key deliverables, namely:

- 1. Energy Supply Security**
- 2. Water Supply Security**
- 3. Strengthening Namibia's Position as a Transport & Logistics Hub**
- 4. Expanding Coverage for Information and Communication Technologies**

Energy Supply Security

Infrastructure is the backbone of economic growth. I am therefore pleased to report on the progress made towards achieving Goal 1 of our Infrastructure Development pillar, which is to secure a cost-effective energy supply. A generation license for the 20 MW Khan Solar PV Independent Power Producer Project was issued. The project also secured the necessary finance for construction and once completed, will contribute to our national grid.

Furthermore, we updated and approved the National Integrated Resource Plan (NIRP), which provides a roadmap for the development of our energy sector.

We have noted the energy insecurity in the region and Namibia will respond commensurately.

In this regard, the Ministry of Mines and Energy will table a proposal to accelerate the deployment of a large-scale solar portfolio, complemented with Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) which should be ready for deployment by 2025.

Additionally, we have made significant progress in the electrification of schools, government institutions, and households, with 213 schools and government institutions in the process of being electrified and 1,011 households already electrified by the City of Windhoek. These achievements demonstrate our commitment to providing Namibians with a reliable and sustainable energy supply.

Water Supply Security

Fellow Namibians,

I am pleased to report that progress has been made towards securing reliable and cost-effective water supply for our country. One of the significant milestones achieved was the completion of the refurbishment of the 6km water canal portion between Ogongo and Oshakati in September 2022.

Additionally, the upgrading of the Calueque to Oshakati Canal is ongoing. Other significant milestones in this sector include the commencement of construction on the Ogongo Canal End Section and the Olushandja-Ogongo Canal. These projects together with the development of the Ohangwena Aquifer's first phase will improve water supply to the region.

As many of us are aware, government has invested 5 Billion Namibian Dollar in the construction of the Neckartal Dam in the //Karas Region; to ensure water sufficiency. We are currently in the process to commence with major irrigation projects in the region.

Strengthening Namibia's Position as a Transport & Logistics Hub

From a transport and logistics hub perspective, Namibia continues to strategically invest in its rail and rolling stock. The upgrade of the Sandverhaar-Bucholzbrunn rail connection, is a good case in point and remains a significant milestone towards improving our rail network. We have also made progress in upgrading the Walvis Bay to Kranzberg Railway, which will enhance the efficiency and capacity of our railway network and support the transportation of goods and people. Furthermore, the Windhoek-Hosea Kutako Road Phase 01 project has reached practical completion, while the concession for the Port of Walvis Bay new Container Terminal found a preferred bidder. At present, negotiations are under way for the operation of the terminal. These investments will not only improve connectivity and accessibility within our transport network but will start to realize Namibia's ambition to become a competitive logistics hub in the region.

Expanding Coverage for Information and Communication Technologies

Both of our State-Owned entities, MTC and Telecom Namibia have performed in line with their mandates. To this end, MTC provides 4G/LTE network coverage for schools at 83 percent and hospitals at 87 percent to bridge the digital divide and stimulate economic inclusion and development. Additionally, Telecom Namibia co-landed the Google Equiano cable in Namibia ensuring that the country remains at the forefront of global connectivity.

We are also making progress in finalizing the Cybercrime Bill and the Data Protection Bill. The Cybercrime Bill will explore the establishment of a National Security and Cyber Incidence Response Team. The Data Protection Bill is at an advanced stage to obtain public inputs before finalization. This Bill protects fundamental human rights such as the right to privacy. Furthermore, 5G provides opportunities for the development of various applications that will benefit several sectors, including agriculture, health, education and finance. Therefore, we plan to implement the 5G Strategy this year.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & COOPERATION

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Chairperson,

The International Relations and Cooperation pillar consists of one key deliverable, namely:

Enhancing Economic Diplomacy for Economic Recovery

There is an African idiom which says that, "*Friendship* is like a track on the sand; it vanishes if not continuously redone." I have always maintained that Namibia is a friend to all and an enemy to none. However, to maintain these friendships and to prevent the tracks in the sand from vanishing, we must constantly re-do them by engaging in activities that enhance our international relations and cooperation.

For this reason, we will pursue a policy of peaceful diplomacy as a country, which gained its independence after a protracted liberation struggle; as a country which benefitted immensely from international solidarity and one midwived by the United Nations. Our prosperity is dependent on the quality of partnerships we have with the rest of the world. In this spirit, we will continue

to promote economic diplomacy and mutually beneficial bilateral and multilateral relations, in order to achieve the overarching goals of the Harambee Prosperity Plans, the National Development Plans and Vision 2030.

Our developmental trajectory is dependent on our ability to influence events and policies in the external environment. We cannot influence global policy on financing for development, the blue economy, climate change and the energy transition as well as the multitude of issues facing humanity, if we do not participate in multilateral and international organizations, to which we are a member.

Similarly, we cannot influence the agenda of peace and development in the region and beyond, if our country is absent or not adequately represented at Summits of Heads of State and Government that discuss issues that impact our stability and our development. Our ability to grow our economy through economic diplomacy depends on our capabilities to champion Namibia as a stable and attractive investment destination.

With the discoveries of oil and the green hydrogen agenda that we are pursuing, there is a heightened focus in the international community towards Namibia. Our country is in demand and in that vein, we are asked to lead and to serve on panels and committees that seek to address global public goods.

Our resources permitting and following an assessment of our national interest and how best they can be promoted, we accept to serve on such panels and committees.

Fellow Namibians,

Under the Harambee Prosperity Plan II, we commenced a review of our bilateral agreements to ensure that our developmental objectives are served optimally. In that vein, a number of Bi-National Commissions, Joint Commissions of Cooperation, and Diplomatic Consultations were held with several countries. We will continue to nurture and consolidate mutually beneficial relations with all our partners through regular visits and daily interactions. We continue to contribute to the efforts of multilateral, international and regional organisations to secure a peaceful world, for trade, investment and shared growth to take place without any hindrance. In this context, Namibia recently participated in the 36th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union (AU) which was held from the 15-19 February 2023, in Ethiopia.

You will recall that, on 21 March 2018, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) was established to enable the free flow of goods and services across the continent and boost the trading position of Africa in the global economy. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) aims to reduce tariffs and has the potential to expand the size of Africa's economy to 29 trillion USD. I therefore, urge Namibian business people to embrace the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and fully take advantage of the opportunities created by this vehicle, including in the context of the development of our Green Hydrogen and Oil and Gas Industries.

Namibia is now ranked as the second largest producer of uranium in the world, after Kazakhstan. Being a producer and exporter of uranium comes with responsibilities related to global energy security. We recognize our global responsibility to ensure that uranium is used for peaceful purposes and development. We will therefore continue to work with the UN system and AU institutions to ensure safeguards are in place.

Namibia was elected to the African Union Peace and Security Council for the period 2022-2025, and served as Chair of the Council for the month of November 2022. Trends in Africa's peace and security architecture continue to be marred by the growing tide of terrorism and violent extremism, as well as a number of unconstitutional regime changes and complex transitions in Guinea, Mali, Sudan and Burkina Faso. Moreover, the adverse impacts of climate change on human development and security; the continued impact of COVID-19; and disinformation and fake news pose serious challenges to our governance architectures. These interconnected challenges make it difficult for us to attain the AU Master Roadmap on Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2030. However, we are encouraged by the activities of the Peace and Security Council, and the Departments that support its work towards this goal.

I always say that when diplomacy fails, people go to war. Similarly, you do not make peace with your friends, you make peace with your enemy. The conflict in Ukraine and Russia has a profound impact on human lives and the global economy with rising oil and energy prices, inflationary pressures and stress on food security. We therefore call on all parties to work towards a path of peace and bring an end to the conflict.

In that vein, I am very pleased that the Government of Ethiopia and the Tigrayan leadership have brokered peace through dialogue on 2 November 2022, with the support of the AU and the International Community.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Chairperson,

In Southern Africa, notwithstanding the challenges we faced in 2022, including the continued insecurity in the Cabo Delgado province of the Republic of Mozambique, significant progress has been made in silencing the

guns. The SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) is making steady progress to stabilize the situation in that region.

The Kingdom of Lesotho successfully concluded elections in October last year and a new Government is in place, which is committed to implementing the outstanding reforms. In this regard we welcome the commitment made by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho to prioritize the completion of the comprehensive national reforms process and approved action plan for the Lesotho Reform Oversight Committee.

Moreover, as a region, we are working with the Kingdom of Eswatini to ensure the implementation of SADC decisions in that country. As Chairperson of the SADC Organ Troika, we reiterate the SADC position condemning all killings, including that of Mr. Thulani Rudolf Maseko, a human rights lawyer and political activist as well as damage to property.

We are also pleased with the progress made through the Luanda and Nairobi Processes, to restore peace in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

We continue to support the efforts of President João Lourenço of the Republic of Angola, who is leading the Luanda process.

The last SADC Extraordinary Organ Troika Summit held on the 31 January this year, which we had the privilege of hosting and chairing in Windhoek, reaffirmed our commitment to dealing with the challenges facing our region, within the framework of African Solutions to African Problems.

In the spirit of deepening regional integration, I am pleased to inform the nation that on February 24, 2023, I joined the President of the Republic of Botswana, His Excellency Mokgweetsi Masisi at the Trans Kalahari/Mamuno Border Post, to launch the use of National Identity Cards as travel documents between Namibia and Botswana. This is a first of its kind in the SADC region.

This development will go a long way in promoting economic activity, by making it easier for citizens of both countries to travel back and forth.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Chairperson,

Humanity is facing unprecedented challenges such as floods, droughts and food insecurity, induced by climate change and the re-emergence of major conflicts. These challenges continue to put stress on the Namibian economy and Africa at large. To deal with these challenges, effectively, would require multilateral action through the United Nations. Africa cannot continue to remain outside the UN Security Council where many resolutions are taken dealing with issues of concern to its future. We therefore reiterate our call, for a just and equitable world order that ensures that no one is left behind. We will continue to advance the Common African Position as set out in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration, with regard to the Reform of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council.

We also believe in the principle of freedom and independence of people to determine their own destiny. This theme is close to our hearts, as a country that has gone through the painful struggle for our liberty, to become the last country in Africa to gain our independence, before, South Africa and South Sudan. However, the last colony in Africa remains the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, whose people are denied their right to self-determination. Thus, we call on the long-awaited 1991 UN Referendum to be conducted without delay.

In the same vein, we continue to call for the unconditional lifting of the unjustified financial, commercial and economic embargoes imposed on the people of Cuba, Venezuela and Zimbabwe. These nations have the right to enjoy their economic freedom and sovereignty without interference.

Fellow Namibians,

It has taken the efforts of countless countrymen and women, years of hard work, to secure the gains which we have made as a nation. The monumental changes that our country has undergone over the past 32 years speak to a government that remains committed to the general welfare and prosperity of all Namibian people.

As Head of State I am confident that the foundations we have put in place over the past 32 years, have set us on a path towards future success.

Every assignment carried out, every project completed, every policy implemented, no matter how small, has served as a stepping stone towards a brighter future, towards the brightening light at the end of the tunnel. Through thick and thin, we have stood firm as a people and as a country. Thus, I can confidently say that the state of our nation remains strong. Let us therefore take a collective decision as Namibians to hold hands and ensure that we all partake in the writing of a new chapter in this nation's history, a chapter defined by strength, a chapter defined by character, a chapter that speaks to the revival of Namibia.

May God bless the Republic of Namibia.

I thank you.