



**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
BY THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION
TECHNOLOGY, DR PEYA MUSHELENGA,
ON NAMIBIA'S AWARD AS THE AFRICAN CHAMPION OF THE
PRESS BY NOBERT ZONGO NATIONAL PRESS CENTRE AT THE
10TH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION
AND THE PRESS IN OUAGADOUGOU, BURKINA FASO**

Wednesday, 25 October 2023

1. Namibia received the prestigious Champion of Press Freedom in Africa Award bestowed on Namibia On Saturday, 21 October 2023, at the recently concluded 10th International Festival of Freedom of Expression and the Press in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, which I have the honour to show to this august House.
2. This Champion of Press Freedom in Africa Award underscores our country enduring dedication to the ethos of freedom of expression and that of the press, which the Namibian Government has guaranteed over the past years, consistently. Namibia's steadfast support for open communication and a free press has not only strengthened our nation's democracy but also positioned it as a model for many countries in Africa and beyond.
3. Namibia recognises the media as an essential component of democracy, ensuring that Namibia remains a beacon of media freedom in Africa. The Government of Namibia's commitment to transparency and open communication is a matter of public record and has earned Namibia a reputation as a free and independent press environment. The Government has implemented policies and practices that support media freedom. Last year, this Parliament passed the Access to Information Bill, which was signed into law by His Excellency the President. Part of the Regulations for the Act, which requires approval by the National Assembly have been finalised and submitted to the Attorney General for certification.
4. Namibia further subscribes to media self-regulation. Although self-regulation is typically less robust and formalised than external regulation, it is still a significant part of the regulation process. It is left up to the media to voluntarily establish and abide by goals, guidelines, and ethical principles. By doing so, media operators accept their share of responsibility within society for the quality of public discourse. The public can appeal to a media ombudsperson when they feel unfairly treated by media content.
5. In an era where press freedom is increasingly under threat globally, Namibia's exemplary leadership is a beacon of hope for those who believe in the fundamental importance of free and responsible media in society. In their 2023 entry, *Reporters Without Borders* said of Namibia, "Journalists...are rarely exposed to threats or dangers. Relations between

the authorities and reporters are generally good. No cases of intimidation have been reported when journalists were covering strikes or protests”. They also say that “licences are granted to media outlets considered less impartial”.

6. The Government of Namibia reaffirms its pledge to protect media freedom as enshrined in the Constitution. It renews its commitment to fostering a positive and enabling environment for freedom of expression and access to information.
7. We believe that no nation can hope to develop democratically without the free expression, publication and distribution of ideas and opinions. Democratic societies can only function sustainably when people are well informed, are able to access and share information freely and can debate ideas.

Thank you.

