



**Motivation Statement on the Motion on Policy on National Reconciliation by**  
**Honourable Dr. Tangeni C.K. Iijambo**  
**on 04 October 2023**

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, Fellow Namibians. Most of us want peace but we do NOT want to uphold it. Peace begets peace. We should acknowledge and respect the fact that “*Children never walk or run before they crawl.*” Namibian truth and reconciliation cannot be reduced and limited to a sentence in the preamble of the country’s supreme law – the Constitution. Our neighbours in SADC with similar geohistoric and colonial pasts have volumes, varying from one to five.

Genuine, well thought through and objective national reconciliation should definitely effect closure, restitution of land. Well designed, defined and executed with evaluator) measures should definitely lead to permanent understanding and healing.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, Fellow Namibians, for former antagonists or adversaries to become friends and reach peace, they not only need to overcome often deep-seated differences and painful recollections of an unhappy past and violence, but also to go through a process of reconciliation, penance, and healing. This means that reconciliation and peace-building are inextricably linked. Scholars typically understand reconciliation as “part of a process of forgiveness characterized by truth telling, redefinition of the identity of the former belligerents, partial justice, and a call for a new relationship” and believe that it is conducive to the building of a persistently stable social order (Long and Brecke 2003, 3).

In Namibia, building a 'stable social order' is often the touted 'peace and stability' mantra of the ruling party, which is employed as a ruse to avoid confronting difficult issues from our common and violent past. Bar-Tal and Bennink (2004) examine reconciliation in two aspects, as [an] outcome and as [a] process. According to Bar-Tal and Bennink (2004, 16), “stable and lasting peace is characterized by mutual recognition and acceptance, invested interests and goals in developing peaceful relations, as well as fully normalized, cooperative political, economic, and cultural relations based on equality and justice, nonviolence, mutual trust, positive attitudes, and sensitivity and consideration for the other party’s needs and interests.” Chapter III of the Supreme Law of the Country, the Constitution of Namibia is clear on “Protection of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms.”



This brings me to the situation of the former Koevoet and SWATF soldiers. If we take this group to assess the extent to which this so-called policy of national reconciliation has succeeded or failed, we cannot be proud of ourselves. Let us seize the historical opportunity and let us bury the hatchet; the suspicion; the resentment; the distrust, the fear, and lay the groundwork for genuine reconciliation, peace, prosperity, and the stability we value so much. The failure can be attributed to the absence of a truth and national reconciliation policy. We tend to forget that these are people, for the most part, who were forcibly conscripted into the apartheid war machine.

I am not saying that they should be recognised as veterans of the liberation struggle, for they are not. Even so, we are bound by the Constitution and under obligation to respect, uphold and protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of every Namibian citizen without any limitation due to race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, creed, gender, social or economic status or political or ideological persuasion.

There are many other marginalised groups to indicate as reference points. For instance, the people in the Njaanai communities, the former farm workers dumped at Oshivelo or in corridors all over the country.

Another example relates to the dwellers of corrugated iron shacks, and even citizens suffering as they continue paying exorbitant prices for the Odendaal commission house in all urban areas in Namibia. Among this group one could include many non-SWAPO Namibian freedom fighters, especially those who were in exile for many years in many parts of the world. Clearly, having reconciled, or being able and willing to reconcile, with Apartheid's representatives, makes it hard to understand why reconciliation with our own people a priority is not. In fact, how is genuine reconciliation possible while the government continues to uphold the same policies which were designed to divide and rule Namibians? To allow for a true reconciliation, SWANU of Namibia is calling upon the government to respect the rights of *all* Namibian citizens. There should be no second-class citizen in our republic. Let us walk the talk; let's promote true reconciliation!

*True reconciliation* permits us to build a lasting peace -- a durable peace that facilitates and addresses the root causes and effects of a long past conflict through a genuine reconciliation, institution building, and political as well as socio-economic transformation for the improvement of the livelihoods and welfare of *all* our people. All former combatants and adversaries deserve recognition as Namibian citizens, and they are an indispensable part of the architecture of national reconciliation.

For the sake of genuine and objective reconciliation, it is incumbent upon government to be concerned with the plight of citizens it is elected to represent. It is the Namibian government's responsibility to consider and address the plight of *all marginalized communities*, including the San, Ovaherero, struggle kids and others. Given the abundance of wealth and resources of Namibia, it is a shame that many Namibians must experience the severe deprivation and neglect that they and their families are going through, while systemic and widespread corruption continues to benefit the ruling class in cahoots with foreigners. It suffices to ask who reconciled with whom in Namibia? Does the intransigence of the government represent an acceptable basis for nation-building, peace, and stability? In other words, what does the current version of "reconciliation" offer marginalized groups?

Namibia and South Africa experienced the same trauma under the Apartheid regime. *South Africans concluded that reconciliation was not possible without truth telling. Given the same experience, what makes us Namibians think that for us true reconciliation is possible without truth?* Therefore, as a first step towards true reconciliation, SWANU of Namibia calls on the government to ensure that a special programme or fund is created to alleviate the suffering and to ameliorate the conditions of squalor and profound poverty they are experiencing, because of their past loyalties and affiliations. For the sake of peace and stability, justice, and equality before the law, we implore the government, not only engage these groups and others who face severe deprivation and insecurity, but to also introduce measures that will restore their human dignity and to ensure that they occupy their rightful place in the sovereign Namibian society. To us (SWANU) doing so consistently would represent an aspect of progress.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, Fellow Namibians, what is the difference between them and those who are guilty of human rights abuses perpetrated in exile? Some of them are even sitting here in this august house today! Is the government paying mere lip service to peace and stability, inclusivity, while stoking the fires of division, hostility, and resentment? Let us speak openly and seriously about genuine and objective national reconciliation. Let us start a dialogue spearheaded by government, to heal and unite this nation for the sake of our children, future generations, and posterity. Is the government prepared to lead the way towards a sustainable and durable peace, without discriminating against any section of its own people? Is the ruling party prepared to gamble with the future of this country and to risk compromising the peace and stability of the country for the sake of political expediency, political correctness and to appease partisan interests in order to maintain popularity. I implore you therefore my brothers and sisters, honourable members, especially members of the ruling party, do not lead Namibia to the dark abyss of an unbridgeable chasm, through lack of vision and foresight.



*I propose that this august house endorse the motion and recommend that the government produce a White Paper on national reconciliation, through the widest possible consultation and such a process to commence without delay. I also, propose that the outcome of such a process be published and translated in all local vernaculars; that it be disseminated widely, to start a process of national self-introspection, reflection, engagement, and healing that will re-animate our republic and bring us closer together.* Let us be pro-active and pragmatic in solving problems and dealing with challenges. Let's heed the wisdom from one of our own national heroes and political philosophers, Hon. Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, who reminded the Apartheid regime to take notice that "suffering has its own effect even on those who impose it." To avoid, defer, skip, prevaricate on complex and difficult issues; to shirk and abdicate responsibility; indifference and the absence of a political will to action, is too risky an attitude and approach that will certainly come at a price too high to pay and a burden too heavy to bear for all Namibians, ultimately including the ruling party itself. Genuine reconciliation is the only way to go, or so SWANU strongly argues.

I thank you.

I so move.