

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY
HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBWA, PRESIDENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA,
ON THE OCCASION OF ADDRESSING
PERMANENT SECRETARIES**

12 MAY 2005

**CONSTITUTION ROOM,
WINDHOEK**

**Check Against Delivery*

Master of Ceremonies
Right Honourable Prime Minister
Honourable Ministers
Esteemed Secretary to the Cabinet
Esteemed Permanent Secretaries
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to have the opportunity to address our most senior civil servants today, about issues of critical importance to our Government and to our country as a whole. Issues related to public service and civil servants in particular should, of essence be addressed, in a proper historical context, with the view to understanding our recent past and gearing ourselves for the future.

Before independence, civil servants were used by the machinery of apartheid as tools of advancing apartheid policies and sustaining oppression of the majority of citizens in our country. Therefore, after the attainment of our freedom and independence, the civil service was naturally expected to change in order to serve Namibia within the letter and spirit of our democratic Constitution the Supreme law of the land. Another important element of the post-independence public service is grounded in the constitutional provision of achieving a balanced restructuring of the civil service.

This exercise did not only entail bringing in previously disadvantaged Namibians, it also entailed issues of gender balance with the view to including women from all backgrounds in decision-making positions. It is a fact that all Secretaries of Departments in the pre-independence dispensation, the equivalent of Permanent Secretaries today, were all male and white. This status quo had to be changed in line with our Constitution.

The results of that balanced restructuring are today visible for all to see. As I look across this room today, I see individuals both male and female, of different ages. This is the outcome of our deliberate policy of restructuring the civil service in a balanced way to serve all our people.

Today, fifteen years after independence, we can look back with pride at a long list of achievements by our civil service in the face of many challenges,

particularly those encountered in our formative years of nation hood. I would, therefore, like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the important role played by our civil service in the development of our country over the last fifteen years.

Our civil service has not only contributed greatly to the establishment of civil structures of governance, but it has also contributed to the maintenance of peace and stability, rule of law and public order by implementing policies and programmes of our SWAPO Party Government . The civil service makes it possible, in other words, it is the conveyor belt that enables the three organs of the state, namely, the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary, to deliver services to our people.

It is therefore, necessary that, in carrying out their duties, civil servants must maintain the highest levels of professional, moral and ethical conduct. It is only through strict adherence to these values that our country can march forward and stand tall as a winning nation among nations, here in the SADC sub-region and beyond. As you are well aware, there are generally accepted perceptions that African leaders and administrators are corrupt and inefficient, that efficient service delivery in African Government is non-existent, that to be served by public officials is a privilege rather than a right, that members of the public are expected to pay bribes before they can access public services.

These perceptions have done a great disservice to our continent. The civil service in Namibia must, therefore, maintain high standards of service delivery in order to ensure that our country does not fall prey of such characterisation. In this regard, our civil servants must embrace the ethos of hard work, commitment to duty and self-sacrifice. Our civil servants must embrace the values of efficient service delivery and productivity. This is the only way we can promote excellence in the public service. Our senior civil servants must lead by example in this regard.

By definition, a public servant's duty is to serve the people, this includes the civil servants. That is why they are called civil servants. It follows that our citizens, the members of the public have the right to access public services from all public institutions. As a duty, civil servants have an obligation. It is in this regard that the slogan of our SWAPO Party Government is efficient service delivery to the nation.

This commitment must be implemented at all levels of Government in line with the undertakings that Government Offices, Ministries and Agencies have made in Namibia's Public Service Charter. As Accounting Officers, all of you are familiar with the respective charters through which your institutions strive to provide efficient public service and promote excellence. The letter and spirit of our Public Service Charter must be implemented not only in individual institutions, but as a system-wide effort. At the same time, we must encourage innovation and punctuality.

Director of Ceremonies,

Our top executives in Government Ministries, Offices and Agencies should always remember that there is a higher calling on them to serve the people and execute their duties with honour and dignity. Our Accounting Officers and other senior civil servants are the key components to ensure that the state delivers services as outlined in government projects and programmes. They are the vehicle to ensure that the Government achieves our national goals and objectives.

In this regard, I emphasise once again that, as officials who are tasked with the important national duties of decision-making and policy implementation, you must acquaint yourselves with the provisions of the 2004 SWAPO Party Election Manifesto. The Manifesto has given each one of you specific responsibilities. Acquaint yourself with its content and thereby identify your specific duties it contains.

We are all cognisant of the fact that the public service is operating under difficult budgetary constraints. Therefore, you have a duty to always try to achieve our goals and objectives within the limited resources at our disposal. Each Accounting Officer must take it upon herself or himself to lead by example and abolish wastage of limited public resources.

It is, therefore, important for you as Accounting Officers and Heads of your respective institutions to share experiences and adopt best practices regarding ways in which budgetary saving can be made and services can be delivered in the most efficient and most cost-effective manner.

Equally important there must be an increased drive to ensure co-ordination of efforts in order to avoid duplication. Through co-ordination, we can achieve more savings and ensure improved results and outcomes. The onus

is on our senior civil servants to eliminate duplication of efforts and to ensure that our government institutions do not work at cross-purposes or with contradiction.

While there is a need to remain consistent and focused, we must also remain dynamic by adopting new ways of doing things. We must not continue to do things, just because that is how we have always done them. Where there is a need for change, change must be effected.

Director of Ceremonies

There is a need to guard against inertia and complacency, especially on the part of our senior civil servants who have served in their positions for many years. We are of course aware that they have gathered valuable experience that can add-value to service delivery and achievement of our objectives. Overtime they have also become crucial to the building of strong institutional memories, which is a necessary element in the existence of any institution.

In the same vein, I would like to urge you all to always put the interests of the Namibian people first. Your high offices should not be turned into bureaus of inhaling deals for personal gain and for the promotion of personal interest. You have a duty to bring dignity and fairness to your offices and to your nation because that is the trust given to you by the Namibian people. They do not expect any less. Similarly, as a Government, we expect you to perform your duties to the best of your abilities. We expect you to deliver effective and efficient services to all Namibians equally. Your duty is to implement Government policies and to ensure that the public call is expanded so that each and every Namibian citizen can get his or her fair share.

In your respective areas of operation, you must ensure that your actions are geared towards the common national goal of promoting the well-being of our people through the provision of public services and amenities, the expansion of the economy, the creation of more employment opportunities, the eradication of poverty and generally the improvement of economic opportunities for all our citizens.

I have come here today to encourage you to continue with hard work in our march to fulfill the mandate given to the SWAPO Party by the electorate. We all have a duty to fulfill the needs of our people and to realise their aspirations. The Namibian people are looking up to us with justifiable expectations to fulfill the dreams and meet their expectations. We must, therefore do everything in our power not to fail them.

This is the message that you must carry back to your respective Offices, Ministries and Agencies. The clock has already started ticking and the time for hard work is now. I have all the confidence that as our top civil service executives you will carry out your mandate with dedication and commitment. I, therefore, look forward to positive reports when the Right Honourable Prime Minister will report back on the progress being made by our public institutions on the implementation of Government policies and programmes.

With hard work and commitment we can achieve our goals and objectives. Let us join hands and march forward together.

Long live the Republic of Namibia!

I thank you.