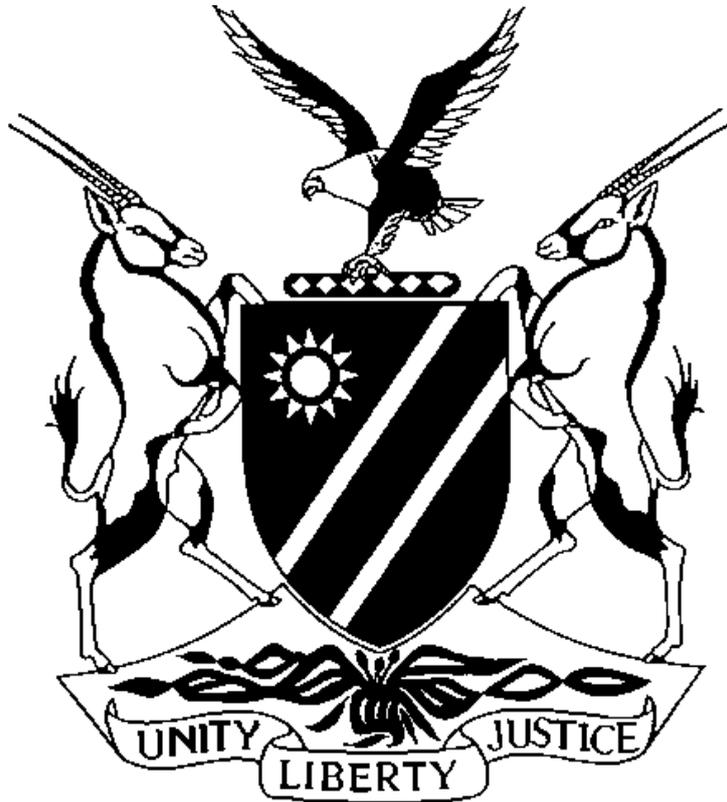


REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY
HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBWA, PRESIDENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAST
CABINET MEETING OF THE YEAR 2006**

12 DECEMBER 2006

**CABINET CHAMBERS,
WINDHOEK**

**Check Against Delivery*

Right Honourable Prime Minister
Honourable Deputy Prime Minister
Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers
Members of the Media
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On 17 January 2006, we gathered in these Chambers for our first Cabinet Meeting of the year. It was an occasion filled with optimism in light of the endless opportunities that lay ahead in the rest of the year, and the possibilities in our hands to bring positive change to the lives of our people. Indeed, we justifiably believed and felt that whatever impediments were on our way, were not insurmountable and that whatever opportunities presented themselves, would be maximised.

Today, we are here in these same chambers for the last Cabinet of the year 2006. As expected, common sense dictates that we look back at the activities of the year to determine whether we have lived up to our expectations. Together with that introspection we must aim our sights to the coming year, for the end of the year does not mean the end of our work. Our mandate continues and it is our constitutional and national duty to look forward and plan how next year can be better than the year that is about to come to an end and how we can deliver more where our efforts did not meet the expectations of our nation.

In terms of planning, monitoring, review and reporting, Government programmes are carried out within a given financial year which does not coincide with a calendar year. However, you will agree with me that the end of the calendar year provides a very useful yardstick in the process of policy implementation. It is precisely for this reason that earlier this month, a Cabinet Review Meeting was held to carry out a Government-wide assessment of the progress we have made with regard to the implementation of our policies and programmes, as well as to identify bottlenecks and impediments that were encountered.

At the centre of the Cabinet Review Meeting is the need to consider how we can improve the way we do things in order to become more effective and efficient. As it was pointed out during the Review Meeting, Government Offices, Ministries and Agencies must improve co-ordination and information sharing in order to ensure that the left hand knows what the right hand is doing and vice versa. It is a matter of fact that we cannot afford to work at cross-purposes or to indulge in any duplication of efforts.

We are fully aware that our country and her people face immense challenges. We have also identified the fact that we face both structural and operational problems in the implementation of our policies and programmes. This means that we should have the courage of our convictions to make the necessary changes in the way we do things. It means that our planning and decision-making process must be dynamic and fully responsive to the needs of our nation in line with Vision 2030 and the 2004 SWAPO Party Election Manifesto.

Many rural communities are crying out daily for attention. They are in need of some of the most basic amenities that many people in Namibia now take for granted. They need water. They need electricity. They need shelter. They need agricultural inputs to increase food production. Indeed, they need those things that make life worth living. They need those basic amenities that each and every human being is entitled to, as a matter of course. Time has come for us to produce tangible results by coming up with workable projects. As we enter the New Year, we must rededicate ourselves to bring more development, more services and more infrastructures of different kinds to our rural areas. It is imperative for us to ensure that rural development continues to enjoy priority. It is also imperative for us to pursue policies that will energise economic growth and expand value addition to our natural resources.

Following the Cabinet Review Meeting, it became clear that there is a need to identify projects in order of priority so that we can become successful in our quest to implement specific projects of an economic nature which would boost the performance of our economy, contribute to the creation of employment opportunities, and complement our anti-poverty activities. As you may recall, the implementation of some of these strategic interventions will be effected through public private partnerships, while others will be covered by full funding from the public purse.

The creation of an economic belt throughout our rural areas should continue to enjoy attention in the New Year because it holds enormous potential in terms of employment creation, poverty reduction and the realisation of our medium and long term development objectives. In this regard, special attention should be given to the development of agriculture, community based tourism, aquaculture and small and medium enterprises.

The construction of feeder roads should also be pursued with greater intensity to ensure that rural populations have access to markets and to facilitate trade and other commercial activities. This must go hand-in-hand with the expansion of the physical infrastructures, including tarred roads, telecommunication networks, housing, the provision of potable water, provision of health care services and education facilities.

Economic growth remains at the centre of social advancement. A vibrant economy translates into higher revenue, more employment opportunities, creation of wealth and thus poverty reduction. It is my hope that the implementation of the recommendations made on the Investors Road Map Report will take us in a direction of stronger economic performance, greater inflow of investments and the expansion of our industrial and manufacturing base.

I wish to see faster progress being made with regard to the re-evaluation and re-grading of job categories in the public service, which forms part of our efforts to make our public service more efficient, motivated and driven. The success or failure of Government programmes is determined by the calibre and the capabilities of those who are charged with the functions of public policy implementation. Therefore, capacity building and human resource development must remain at the forefront. In this regard, I urge all stakeholders involved to accelerate the coming into being of NIPAM, Namibian Institute for Public Administration and Management.

The looming power supply shortage in our sub-region is a source of great concern. As such, the relevant agencies should not spare any efforts in pursuing the implementation of the Gas-to-Power, Kudu Gas Project. It is true that we are faced with many competing priorities, in an environment of limited resources. Therefore, we must endeavour to make each cent count and thereby learn to do more with less. It is a source of great concern to note that the rate of unemployment in our country has reached 36.7 percent. We need to do more to address this problem. We need to do more to promote employment opportunities, especially among the youth and women. These are the challenges we must face head-on. The task is difficult, however, these are the realities we face. We must do the best we can in order to take our country forward.

I am confident that the year 2007 will be a year of more successes and triumphs. I am also confident that our plans will be fruitful and more Namibians will rejoice as they experience a transformation of our society and improvements in their living conditions as a result of better service delivery by our Government and its agencies. In order to succeed, monitoring, evaluation and coordination must remain our pass word.

With this sense of optimism, hope and pragmatism, it is my pleasure to open the last Cabinet Meeting for the year 2006. I wish you all a Merry Christmas and Prosperous New Year.

I thank you.