

# REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY  
HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBWA, PRESIDENT  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA,  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE MEETING  
WITH SENIOR CIVIL SERVICE MANAGERS**

**8 FEBRUARY 2007**

**CONSTITUTION ROOM**

*\*Check Against Delivery*

Director of Ceremonies  
Right Honourable Prime Minister  
Secretary to Cabinet  
Permanent Secretaries  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by wishing you all a Happy and Prosperous New Year. The year 2007 presents opportunities and challenges for the public service and I would like to make use of this opportunity to share my views, from the perspective of the public service management, how your active involvement as senior public service managers would be instrumental to positive outcomes during the year.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to Offices, Ministries and Agencies which, despite many odds, managed to perform exceptionally well. Here, I, in particular wish to thank the Ministry of Education for managing to place our learners in schools at the start of the school year. Well done!

At the opening of the first Cabinet session of 2007 a few weeks ago, I set out the basic thinking and the thrust of our collective vision for the new year. I emphasized the fact that civil servants are the backbone of the implementation of government policies. Thus, we must continue to inculcate a sense of purpose, urgency and dedication across the public service.

Similarly, we must continually emphasise the fact that public service is about serving the public, who are the tax payers. Effective and dedicated civil servants will enable the Government to provide critical services such as health and education to all our people. In this light, it is crucial for civil servants to carry out their responsibilities with dedication and a clear sense of purpose.

We live in a country that is still marked by social and economic disparities between members of society. Our people are faced with hardships in their efforts to secure better livelihoods, as a result of poverty, unemployment, the effects of the HIV/Aids pandemic and other challenges. Thus, a day passing without progress by the state machinery to provide better living conditions for our people, is a day too long.

The challenges we face call for speedy service delivery and the abolition of practices that do not produce desired results.

Our system of government is founded on the principles of the separation of powers and democratic accountability. This gives resilience to our institutions of government so that we can deliver efficient and reliable services to the public.

Thus, we must, strive to align our system of governance with the will of the people by making it possible for them to have a direct voice in the process of national development. We must adjust our administrative machinery appropriately so that the relationship between citizens and officials can be based on respect, honesty and the appreciation of legitimate expectations on the part of the public vis-à-vis the civil servants. We must create a culture of empowered citizens who can assert their rights and justifiable expectations for public officials to render services in an accountable and transparent manner.

I believe that our country can rise to greater heights and achieve success by its own will and through its own efforts. In this regard, civil service managers have an important role to play in achieving these goals in close cooperation and consultation with the political principals.

In order to succeed, however, we must be bold enough to make a thorough assessment and introspection to identify practices and structures that hamper progress with the view to addressing difficulties promptly. We must also improve and strengthen our mechanisms for intra-government co-ordination through timely and regular sharing of information.

When we talk of government '*of the people, by the people, and for the people*', we mean, among other things, a democratic system where the people are free to choose their leaders through the ballot box in free elections; where they can actively participate in the process of development; a government that offers its citizens peace and security; a judicial system underpinned by just and impartial laws; a system of planning and decision-making that gives a voice to all citizens through decentralisation and above all, a political system that allows and reflects all views of the citizens. It is these values that must guide your actions and deeds as you carry out your duties.

Our country cannot afford to lag behind other nations in terms of adopting best practices in the field of public administration. We must learn from the success of others and create a capable Government in order to achieve the objectives of our development agenda. A capable Government creates a conducive environment for investment, sustained socio-economic growth and development. It offers a chance for the fruits of such growth to be shared equitably. A capable Government facilitates and ensures effective governance at all levels. It combats corruption, incompetence and wastage. Above all, it promotes good governance.

Good governance is about serving the people. It is about giving them both a tangible present and future benefits – in education, health, social security, sanitation, potable water, electricity, and housing. It is about efficiency, transparency, and accountability – right across all branches of the state, namely, the executive, the judiciary, and the legislature. This is the kind of state it is the kind of government that our people deserve.

Our citizens expect only the highest quality of service from us because they invest in the public service through the taxes that they pay. If the returns on their investment does not translate into quality service delivery, they will make their voices known. Therefore, public service must go beyond the mere act of doing a job efficiently and honestly. It must demonstrate a complete dedication to a strong work ethic and a recognition that every human being deserves courtesy and consideration.

I believe that as public servants, our work must be a source of professional satisfaction as well as an eagerness to serve our people and to learn more. As I travel across the country I meet with many committed civil servants who relate to me their joy in giving a child a head start by teaching her how to read, write and spell words. Others say that they cannot put a price on the joy of a family gaining access to electricity and potable water for the first time. How do you measure the lives saved through immunisation campaigns against polio in different parts of our country? All of these joyful experiences are possible because of the commitment and dedication of our civil servants across the country. I want to thank and encourage them to continue doing their best.

We must view the challenges facing our country through a broader socio-political and economic perspective.

We must forge partnerships with our social and development co-operation partners whose support is essential to the realization of our common objectives.

I wish to emphasise the point that our public service must maintain high levels of professional standards in the management of human, material, financial, and information resources to meet the increasingly complex challenges of development and nation-building. Hence, excellence, constant search for perfection, and value-for-money should permeate all our management practices.

Our focus must be people-centered while the rules, procedures, and regulations must be applied for the promotion of efficiency and consistency in our work. While providing advice on the implementation of policies and programs for the benefit of our citizens, public service managers must constantly explore innovative means of realizing our policy objectives. In light of the complex challenges we face, it is necessary to consider new modes of service delivery and operational procedures.

It is imperative that we strengthen the existing mechanisms to promote economic growth and boost the capacity of the economy to create jobs, especially among our youth and women. After all we can only grow our economy if we put appropriate measures in place.

I am pleased to note that the relevant stakeholder ministries are in the process of reviewing impediments that undermine our economic development efforts through the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Investor Roadmap Study. We are also in the process of finalising the third National Development Plan (NDP3). I am aware that a Planning Workshop for all Permanent Secretaries is scheduled for 16 February 2007, where you will discuss the planning approach of NDP3. I urge you to make your inputs towards this important endeavour in order to ensure that NDP3 becomes a resounding success.

One of the important mechanisms in public service delivery is the service charters introduced in different Offices, Ministries and Agencies. We must ensure that the various service charters remain living documents and should not be used merely as window dressing tools. The charter programme is an on-going effort that should be improved upon year on year. It is a process of strengthening our systems and fostering positive behavioural change among civil servants with a view to developing a healthier relationship between the public service and its customers. I have heard of complaints about civil servants not returning phone calls, while others do not respond to correspondences. There should be no place for complacency or such lacklustre performance in our public service.

Our citizens in rural areas, particularly the women bear a heavy burden caused by poverty. We have a duty to address the inequalities and inefficiencies of the past so that our rural areas can become productive and sustainable. Therefore, the proposed economic development belt for our rural areas must be pursued with greater intensity. As public service managers, we must commit ourselves to an integrated rural development strategy which aims to eliminate poverty and create prosperous communities. Equally, we must encourage the rural population to shape the development agenda, through their involvement in local decision making structures, such as regional and constituency development committees, as well as local authority structures.

I urge you as Accounting officers to ensure that our budget is wisely utilised towards the achievements of our national priorities, particularly the development of critical infrastructures. We must bring potable water, quality health care, electricity, housing, roads and quality education to our people.

Decentralization must go beyond functions performed by elected representatives and regional and local governments. It requires that our local and regional governments become proactive in providing services, such as, education, health, and sanitation. We need to pay specific attention to sanitation. After all, sanitation is key to the health of our citizens.

While intensifying our efforts to achieve food security and eradicate poverty, we must seriously investigate alternative means to harness our bountiful natural resources to accelerate our new drive for sustainable modernization and rural transformation.

As I stated previously, our aim should be to achieve tangible results with regard to the improvement of the quality of life of all our people. If we fail in this regard, the prevailing peace and security will be eroded as long as our citizens remain poor and destitute.

The key lies in leadership. Purposeful, citizen-oriented, and entrepreneurial leadership through which public service managers can transform our public institutions into genuine instruments of public service, positive change and societal transformation. The government has already approved the establishment of the Namibian Institute for Public Administration and Management. We need to urgently finalise the creation of this critical institution.

In essence, as public service managers, your principal objective should be to create a public service that is citizen-oriented rather than self-serving; innovative rather than rule-bound; capable of forging constructive partnerships with outside groups rather than being insular; professionally competent rather than being patronage or corruption-ridden.

It is my hope that during the year ahead, you will constantly review our development agenda to ensure that it is relevant and effective. In order to effectively address the challenges facing us, we must renew our resolve and strengthen management accountability rather than stifling initiative and creativity. Our aim should be to create a public service that is results-oriented, time- and cost conscious. We should not allow hierarchy, protocol, or the cynical interpretation and application of rules to slow down our progress.

Equally important is the need to redouble our efforts in our collective fight against the HIV/Aids pandemic. The scourge of HIV/Aids is a serious socio-economic problem with devastating effects on the social fabric of our country. The rate at which the disease is spreading is alarming and the care of the increasing numbers of people affected by the virus puts a heavy burden on our health resources. We must, therefore, work towards increasing our efforts and ensuring that existing strategies are complemented with additional multifaceted efforts from all sections of our society.

By working together we can build a better Namibian society. We can inspire our people and our civil servants with a vision to propel our development agenda forward towards Vision 2030. You are not bystanders in this process. As you carry out your various responsibilities, I trust that you will devote yourselves to meet the common needs and aspirations of our people. Through hard work, honesty, and commitment you will reinforce the trust of the Namibian people have in our public service. Let's not disappoint our nation.

I thank you.