

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY
PRESIDENT HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBWA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE
LAST CABINET MEETING FOR 2007**

11 DECEMBER 2007

WINDHOEK

Right Honourable Prime Minister
Honourable Deputy Prime Minister
Honourable Ministers
Secretary to Cabinet and your staff
Members of the Media
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to welcome you to our last Cabinet Meeting of 2007. This year was a busy year indeed, Cabinet deliberated and took decisions on many issues of national importance. At the very outset, I would like to express appreciation and satisfaction for the spirit of unity, patriotism and openness in which Cabinet business was conducted.

I would, therefore, like to take this opportunity to thank the Right Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister and all Members of Cabinet for their support, hard work and dedication during the course of this year. I would also like to commend the Cabinet Secretariat for their commitment to duty in ensuring that adequate preparations were made for each and every Cabinet Meeting, including this one.

Other Organs of State, namely, the Legislature and the Judiciary have also contributed according to their respective mandates to the smooth running of our work as Cabinet during the course of the year. Their contribution is noted and is highly appreciated.

In our system of governance, Cabinet is entrusted with enormous responsibilities, by virtue of its position at the centre of the Executive Organ of the State. Ours is the duty to ensure proper formation and implementation of Government policies. As such, the decisions that we take affect the lives of our people in a practical and direct manner.

I would also like to thank the registered political parties represented in our Parliament for the constructive interactions and suggestions that their respective leaders have made during consultations with the Office of the President. I appreciate the exchange of views on various topics and issues affecting our people. This is essential to the task of nation building and the process of national reconciliation.

At this juncture, it is important to look at the goals and targets that we set ourselves to achieve since our first Cabinet Meeting which was held on 23 January 2007. As you are all aware, the end of the calendar year does not correspond or coincide with our Financial Year. However, it still serves as an important milestone in terms of assessing our performance. This would enable us to identify shortcomings and to devise ways and means of addressing them. Where performance has been strong, we should continue to re-inforce those areas in order to achieve better results in the future. Where difficulties, were encountered, we must resolve to work better, harder and smarter.

In total, 22 ordinary Cabinet Meetings were held this year and 290 decisions were taken or adopted. These include Policy on Tourism and Wild Life Concessions on State Land; Private Sector Development Policy for Namibia; Baynes Hydropower Plant Development; 2007: Drought Situation in the country and Proposed Amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, to mention but a few.

One of the important milestones in our public policy making process this year has been the finalisation of the Third National Development Plan (NDP 3). This is one of our most important medium term development policies. It is our road map for social and economic development, through which we aim to bring about visible improvement in the social and economic landscape of Namibia. NDP 3 has specific targets that must be met in different sectors. These targets relate to provision of social amenities such as education, health care, water, housing, electricity as well as the promotion of economic growth.

There is also a strong focus on the growth of the economy, creation of employment opportunities, expansion of our manufacturing base, food production, as well as the expansion of our physical and communication infrastructures, such as roads, railways, harbours, airports and telecommunication networks.

In this context, the implementation of NDP 3, Vision 2030 and the 2004 SWAPO Party Election Manifesto should remain at the centre of policy implementation. They should form part of our most urgent priorities and areas of focus. The 2004 SWAPO Party Election Manifesto is the medium through which we carry out our mandate to govern as given to the SWAPO Party during the Presidential and National Assembly Elections in 2004. As you are well aware, we are fast approaching the final phase of our mandate. It is, therefore, incumbent upon all of us to ensure that we fulfill the expectations, aspirations and wishes of the electorate by doing all that we can to ensure the implementation of the Manifesto in its broadest sense.

Both the Manifesto and the NDP 3 are important catalysts for the realisation of our long-term development policies encapsulated in the Vision 2030. Their effective implementation will bring us closer to the realisation of the Vision 2030. We must continually assess, monitor and evaluate the implementation of this road map. Where short comings are detected, or where we appear to veer off our chosen course, we must act quickly to effect remedial action.

The dynamics of modern governance demands of us as civil servants, lawmakers and political leaders to be innovative and forward looking in order to address both present and future challenges. We must provide effective solutions and deliver goods and services that our people need.

Our previous Cabinet Meeting discussed the matter of the Interim Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union. Namibia is not prepared to sign the Interim EPA in its current form because it would curtail our options as a sovereign nation to conduct our economic and industrial policies. These events demonstrate the volatility of international trade and the risks to which our economies are exposed.

We will continue to explore ways to find the best possible arrangements that complement our national interests. Signing an agreement that restricts our policy options is not in our best interests as a nation. However, efforts will continue to engage the EU in order to find an amicable solution.

In the meantime, relevant stakeholders from the public and private sectors should work together to address the possible negative economic impact flowing from this situation. Our farmers, especially beef producers, need to explore new markets for their products because the entry of Namibian meat in the EU may no longer be economical, starting January 2008. This situation presents a serious challenge to policymakers both in the public and private sectors. As such, it requires collective action.

The year 2008 should be a time of intensified action from the political and administrative heads of our public institutions and their staff members. The Namibian people, especially those in rural areas, expect their Government to deliver services in order to improve their living standards. Government Offices, Ministries and Agencies should move fast and in a coordinated manner to ensure that public services and amenities reach all targeted groups as indicated in our programmes and policies. These include the youth, women, the elderly, orphans and vulnerable children, workers, peasants, people with disabilities and those infected and affected by the HIV/Aids pandemic.

The Ministers Conference on Decentralisation was an important milestone in the policymaking arena. It demonstrated our continuing commitment to bringing Government closer to the people. The review of the Decentralisation Policy should create new momentum and opportunity to iron out difficulties that have been encountered during the implementation process.

Another important policy measure is the preparation of the Strategic Management Plans by Government Offices, Ministries and Agencies. I wish to congratulate and commend those who have already completed their Strategic Plans. Those who have not yet done so must complete theirs in the first half of next year. We must ensure that Government Institutions are moving at a reasonable pace with regard to the strategic vision of our public service.

Director of Ceremonies,

Several Heads of State and Government visited our country this year with a view to further cement bilateral and economic co-operation with Namibia. I also undertook several State and Official Visits to countries in Africa and other parts of the world. This resulted in the signing of bilateral and economic co-operation agreements aimed at boosting trade and creating mutually beneficial ties between Namibia and our development co-operation partners.

I, therefore, call upon all Ministries, Offices and Agencies who have a role to play in the concretization of these bilateral agreements to ensure proper co-ordination and follow-up so that our country can reap their benefits.

We have signed these agreements with serious intention. It goes without saying that their implementation must be pursued and realised with the seriousness which they deserve. We should not tolerate a situation where months or even years elapse before any follow-up is made to implement the agreements signed between Namibia and other countries. In the changing global economy, we must move swiftly to engage other countries for the mutual benefit of our country. If we fail to act, the biggest losers will be the people of Namibia. Thus, prompt and effective action in these and indeed other matters is imperative.

The holiday season is now at hand and many of you will take leave to go and rest from the activities of this hectic year. Let us use this time to rest and further strengthen ties with our family members, our friends and our communities. This is one way in which we can promote the well-being of our families and our communities, while pushing forward the objectives of our policy of national reconciliation.

I look forward to your continued co-operation and support in the coming year. May, I now take this opportunity to wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous 2008.

I thank you.