

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY
HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBWA, PRESIDENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA ON THE
OCCASION OF THE FIRST CABINET
MEETING FOR 2009**

20 JANUARY 2009

WINDHOEK

**Check against Delivery*

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

I would like to start by welcoming you to the chambers for the first Cabinet Session of 2009. I trust that all of you had a restful holiday season and were able to spend quality time with your families and friends. I trust that we are all fully recharged with new energy to face the challenges ahead.

The Namibian Constitution spells out the responsibilities of the Cabinet. I need not remind members of Cabinet about their constitutional responsibility over the institutions of which they are the political heads. In that capacity, Ministers must continue to coordinate the implementation of Government policies and programmes in line with the 2004 SWAPO Party Election Manifesto, which is our contract with the Namibian electorate and our blueprint for governance. My position which I stated in my closing remarks during the last Cabinet Session of 2008 remains the same. We must remain united in support and execution of Cabinet decisions.

Dear Colleagues,

Cabinet must provide leadership for our country to excel and achieve the goals that we have set for ourselves as a nation. In this regard, each member of this body must contribute to our collective success and to the well-being of all Namibians. This calls for full participation in Cabinet deliberations so that our decisions are informed by the collective wisdom of us all.

The year 2009 will be a momentous period in the development and strengthening of our democracy. In November, we will hold Presidential and National Assembly Elections. Therefore, all ministers must co-ordinate with the Prime Minister, who in turn will co-ordinate with the SWAPO Party Secretary General, to provide the information required to compile our Election Manifesto for 2009.

This must go hand-in-hand with the necessary work to mobilize the electorate so that they can rally behind the SWAPO Party to win a resounding victory. We are proud that Namibia has consistently held peaceful democratic elections since independence, where voters exercise their preferences freely. This is the source of strength for our democracy. It is also a measure by which the international community gauges our commitment to constitutional and democratic governance.

It is important that our political system at all levels continues to promote the values of peace, tolerance, stability and social cohesion. In this light, all political parties must conduct their election campaigns in a peaceful manner. All unnecessary provocations that may lead to confrontations and violence must be avoided.

In fact, Namibia must learn lasting lessons from the difficult experiences of other countries where politically motivated violence has caused untold suffering. We cannot afford to repeat such mistakes.

I call on the Electoral Commission to work with all stakeholders in the preparations for the elections to facilitate a smooth and credible electoral process. I wish to make a special appeal to all eligible voters to register and vote in the upcoming elections.

Dear Colleagues,

As leaders, our energies must be focused on the well being and the improvement of the living standards of all our people. All line ministries and agencies must therefore, implement our development policies and programmes in order to deliver services to all our people. Rural development and assistance to vulnerable sections of our population must continue to enjoy Government attention. We must also pursue the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, as part of our anti-poverty strategy.

The current global economic crisis calls for innovative approaches to minimize its impact on our country. It demands deeper reflection and the development of home-grown solutions to overcome the challenges faced by our people in the short and long terms.

One of the options is for our country to expand and improve agricultural output for food security and ultimately, food self-sufficiency. Good progress has been made at some Government-funded agricultural projects. However, I believe that larger tracts of land should be placed under cultivation to increase yields and thereby reduce the importation of agricultural products such that can be grown locally.

The improvement in agricultural output must also extend to livestock farming in communal and commercial areas. Farmers must ensure that their small and large stock herds are healthy as this will increase their economic value for local and international markets.

Improved agricultural output should result in many benefits for our people, in the form of affordable food prices, diversity of available produce and better opportunities for subsistence farmers to sell their surplus produce at reasonable returns. The relevant line ministries and agencies should move swiftly to attend to the remaining challenges in this sector including the availability of proper storage and marketing facilities.

The health of our people remains a priority. As such, health services must be accessible and affordable. Service delivery must be intensified and expanded, including the provision of anti-retroviral treatment to those infected by HIV/AIDS.

The prevention of mother-to-child transmission of the virus must also be stepped-up. Similarly, increased coverage and availability of treatment must be implemented with respect to tuberculosis, immunization against childhood illnesses, malaria and the recurrent outbreaks of cholera and polio. These efforts must be complemented by deliberate training programmes for health professionals and personnel who are needed to modernize and make our public health system fully responsive to the needs of our people.

Our SWAPO Party Government views education as a top priority and will continue to allocate the largest share of the national budget to the sector as our investment in the future. We must also continue to implement ETSIP, which has already started to produce good results. This is evident from the increasing enrolment figures and more equitable distribution of resources to all regions and schools around the country. A strong and effective education system is crucial for the development of our country.

Vocational training programmes must also be expanded in order to accommodate our youth who need to acquire skills and competencies in different disciplines. This will enable them to secure employment, and initiate and manage income generating ventures.

I urge relevant institutions to speed-up the establishment of vocational training centres that our Government has planned for Karas, Kavango and other regions where there are no such training facilities.

Adequate housing is a basic necessity of life for all human beings. Through the Build Together Programme, many families, including low income earners have acquired their own dwellings. Another programme focusing on the veterans of the liberation struggle has also provided modern housing to veterans of advanced age. Provision of housing should go hand-in-hand with improvements in sanitation, especially by eliminating the bucket-system from the towns and settlements where it is still used. We should also encourage our people in rural areas to dig and make use of pit latrines in order to improve sanitation.

Dear Colleagues, steady economic growth and value addition will enable our economy to generate more jobs, foster the transfer of skills and contribute to government revenues. As a Government, we must encourage the business sector to create employment by maintaining stable industrial relations and providing incentives to investors. In this context, I welcome the envisaged development of Ohorongo Cement Factory near Otavi.

We must also focus on the expansion of our telecommunication and physical infrastructure including our roads, bridges, the national power grid, harbours and airports. These are the backbone of our economy. We must ensure that they are always in a good state of repair in order to facilitate economic activities.

I recognise the achievements that each of you have made in the areas of your responsibilities. We are aware that more needs to be done to achieve the goals of Vision 2030. As much as we strive for an effective and vibrant democracy, we must also focus on the bread and butter issues, including infrastructure development, housing, health, education, rural development, social welfare and job creation. Our SWAPO Party Government must continue to pay attention to the welfare of our senior citizens, orphans and veterans of our liberation struggle. I, therefore, call upon the Ministry of Veterans Affairs to ensure that the applications by eligible veterans to be registered are speedily processed so that those who qualify can access the monthly allowance of N\$2000.00

Dear Colleagues,

This is another year of hard work to enhance the well-being of our people. We must not relent in our political commitment to make Namibia a better place. We must unequivocally demonstrate that we are committed to govern through the implementation of pragmatic policies that make a positive difference in the lives of our people and improve the economic trajectory of our country.

The implementation of our NDP2, NDP3 and Vision 2030 provide an indication of what has been achieved and what remains to be done. We must put shoulder to the wheel and work for the achievement of our goals in line with our electoral mandate and the 2004 SWAPO Party Election Manifesto.

Our foremost pre-occupation in this New Year must be on the well-being of all our people. Our energies, creativity and wisdom must be devoted to finding solutions to challenges that face our communities. Our country will only be as strong as the families and the communities that constitute it.

Let us, therefore, continue to do everything in our power to strengthen the social fabric of our country by providing exemplary leadership to our people. We must face the current difficult economic situation with the optimism that we will weather the storm through resilience and by taking informed decisions.

Let us join hands and work together for the well-being of all Namibians.

I wish you success for the year that lies ahead.

I thank you.