

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY,
HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBAMBA, PRESIDENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE
LAST CABINET SESSION FOR 2008**

09 DECEMBER 2008

WINDHOEK

**Check Against Delivery*

**Right Honourable Prime Minister
Honourable Deputy Prime Minister
Honourable Ministers
Esteemed Secretary to the Cabinet and your Team
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

With the approaching holiday season, the year 2008 is slowly drawing to a close. This 23rd Session of Cabinet is also the last one for the year. This was indeed a busy time for our SWAPO Party Government. As Cabinet, we took deliberate steps to carry out our duties and responsibilities entrusted upon us by the supreme law of the land, the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia.

During the said period, Cabinet held 23 ordinary meetings, including today's session. Four special sessions were held. In total, 312 decisions were taken. The decisions taken by Cabinet have an impact on the lives of our people and the direction that our country can take in terms of socio-economic development, political stability, employment creation and the provision of services to our citizens.

I wish to commend you, colleagues for your dedication to the work at hand during the year. I also wish to thank you for your contributions to the debates in Cabinet that enabled us to take informed decisions in the interest of all the Namibian people.

I am happy that several policy initiatives were tabled, discussed and adopted this year with a view to improving service delivery, boosting economic performance, creating new jobs and addressing a myriad of other developmental challenges. Among the major policy decisions taken by Cabinet include the following:

- Zero-rating of certain basic commodities to mitigate the impact of high food prices on consumers;**
- Power generation and uranium beneficiation in Namibia;**
- Establishment of the cardiac unit at the Windhoek Central Hospital;**
- Text books policy for primary and secondary schools;**
- Review of the water supply and sanitation sector policy;**

- Namibia's participation in the broad band-connectivity on the African West coast cable project;
- Comprehensive emergency Food Aid scheme for the Financial Year 2008/2009;
- Development of a new Information Communication Technology Framework for Namibia;
- Policy Framework for the Namibia Institute of Public Administration and Management;
- Development of Bulk water supply Infrastructure in Namibia in the next five years;
- Mainstreaming of disability issues by all Offices/Ministries and Agencies;
- Transformation of small business Credit guarantee Trust into a licensed Banking Institution;
- Transformational Economic and Social Empowerment Framework for Namibia;
- Alignment of State Owned Enterprises to the National Strategy Vision 2030;
- Placement of grade 10 repeating learners into schools and other institutions of learning;
- National Bio Oil Energy Policy options for Namibia;
- Emergency measures to control and prevent the spread of foot-and-mouth disease in Kavango Region; and
- Namibia's National Policy on Tourism among others.

Cabinet also discussed and approved important legislative initiatives including the National Youth Council Bill; the State owned Enterprises Amendment Bill; Farmers' Rights Bill; Plant Breeder's Rights Bill; Amendment of the Prevention of Organized Crime Bill, and the Amendment of the Magistrates Courts Act, among others.

In keeping with our commitment to promote good governance, Cabinet took many administrative actions such as the discussion of Annual Reports of several state-owned enterprises and statutory bodies. The policy initiatives and administrative decisions taken by Cabinet are aimed at enabling our SWAPO Party Government to deliver services and fulfill its mandate in an effective and efficient manner.

From 19 to 21 May this year, we held a Cabinet Retreat at Walvis Bay under the theme Economic Growth, Empowerment and Wealth Creation.

The delegates were divided into four break-away groups focusing on the subjects of:

- Employment and Wealth Creation;**
- Health, Housing and Sanitation;**
- Poverty Reduction and Rural Development; and**
- the broad theme of empowerment.**

The Retreat made a number of recommendations for policies and measures to be initiated and implemented by Government and other public institutions. These recommendations are aimed at boosting the performance of our economy in order to create new employment opportunities.

They are also focused on strengthening our anti-poverty programmes, accelerating rural development and introducing mechanisms to allow for periodic review of the process of implementation of the recommendations.

The Cabinet Retreats have always been structured as special platforms where our Government brings policy makers together in order to deliberate on important national issues and to suggest appropriate solutions. They also enable our government to harness the expertise and knowledge of other Namibians to contribute to the policy making process. Steps have already been taken to implement the recommendations of the last Cabinet Retreat. More will be done in the New Year to ensure that the goals we have set out to achieve are met.

The launching of the Third National Development Plan (NDP3), this year was a major milestone. The plan builds on the momentum created by the earlier National Development Plans towards the achievement of our national long-term strategy, Vision 2030. It is designed to maximize the benefits and advantages of participatory

development. Many stakeholders, including communities have a role to play in the success of the plan.

Dear Colleagues,

The mandate of governance requires total dedication to duty. It demands clear-headed leadership in difficult times. It is our duty as elected leaders to provide such leadership. As the world faces a difficult economic situation, Namibia will also be negatively affected. Already, the mining industry has felt the effects of the global recession, with the closure of some local copper mines. This has caused a loss of many jobs. Our nation must stand together in order to meet and address the economic challenges that face our country now and in the future.

As we search for solutions to the development challenges facing our nation, we should consider both the short and long term options available to us. In the short term, we must introduce immediate measures to provide relief to those threatened by food shortages as a result of the drought and the poor harvests caused by floods. This requires both the provision of food aid and the creation of local capacity to grow food under the Green Scheme.

In the long term, we must continually strengthen policy measures such as the Education Sector Improvement Programme and the Third National Development Plan, Vision 2030 and other initiatives in the areas of health, sanitation, infrastructure development and rural development.

I am pleased that the support services to Cabinet and its sub-committees have improved. This has enabled Cabinet and its sub-committees to streamline their work and increase efficiency.

Dear Colleagues,

It is crucial to ensure that as a Government we continue to abide and live by the tested principles that have guided us over the years. I have in mind the principles of collective accountability, effective consultations, transparency, team work and efficiency.

The work that we do and the decisions we take as Cabinet are based on the principle of collective responsibility. This means that once a decision is taken in Cabinet, all members are obliged to support and to stand by such a decision at all times and on all platforms. It is disconcerting, and it embarrasses the Government as whole, and indeed the governing Party when a member of Cabinet who was party to a Cabinet decision, uses another platform to voice disagreement with the very same decision.

I am also concerned that, despite the principles that I have just referred to, and despite the fact that the Namibian Constitution gives the President a prerogative to make certain decisions, some Party members, and even members of Cabinet, have taken it upon themselves to publicly question the exercise of such prerogative. As we all know, there are existing structures through which Party members and Cabinet members can raise their concerns about the actions of Government. It is such structures that must be utilized in order to maintain cohesion and unity within the Party and Government.

Dear Colleagues,

The festive season is just around the corner. Many Namibians have already started traveling to different holiday destinations around the country. The message must be loud and clear this holiday season. Traffic laws, rules and regulations must be obeyed and observed at all times. Anyone who violates traffic rules and puts the lives of other road- users at risk must face the full force of the law.

I, therefore, call upon all of you to support the efforts of our law enforcement officials to maintain law and order and promote the safety of all road users during this busy time of the year. Let us make use of the holiday season to rest and regain our strength after a busy year. In that manner we can return fully recharged in the New Year to take on the challenges of governance once again. I take this opportunity to wish you all and your families a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

I thank you.