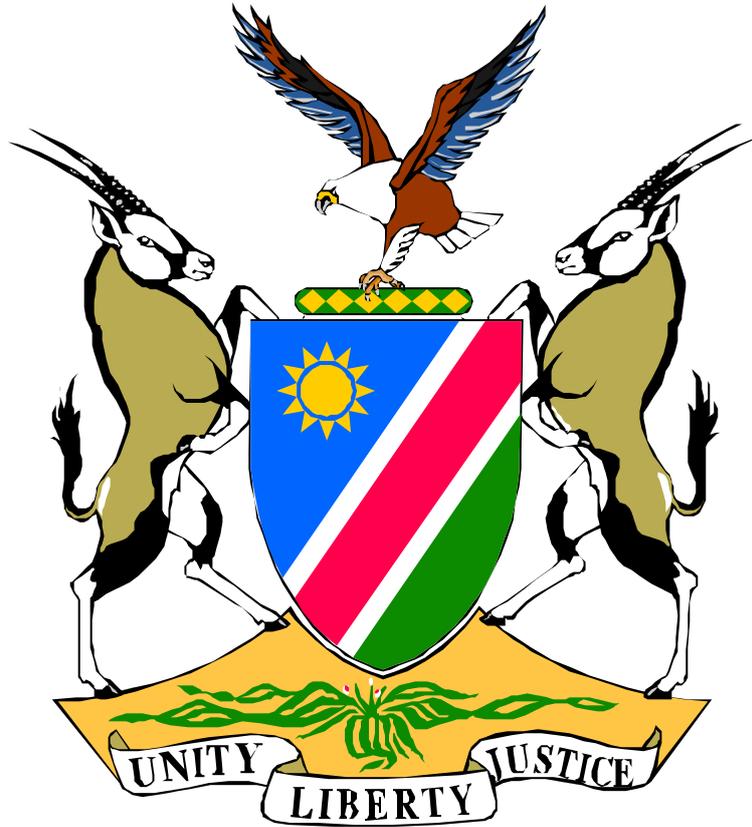


# REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY  
DR HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBWA,  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE COMMEMORATION  
OF AFRICA DAY 2011 UNDER THE THEME:  
“AFRICA AND THE DIASPORA”**

**25 May 2011**

**WINDHOEK**

*Check Against Delivery*

Good Evening Fellow Namibians,

I am pleased to address the nation this evening on the occasion of the 49<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Africa Day. On this special day, we pay tribute to the pioneers of Pan Africanism such as Henry Sylvester Williams, Marcus Garvey, Paul Robertson, George Padmore, W E B Du Bois, and others. These Pan Africanists planted the seeds which grew into the rallying point for the people of African descent to claim their rights and their humanity in the face of the brutality of slavery and colonialism.

They also inspired leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Modibo Keita, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Emperor Haile Selassie, Julius Nyerere, Sekou Toure and many others who became the founding fathers of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. In 2002, the OAU was transformed into the African Union to advance the historic task of championing the best interests of our continent.

Thus, the focus of the AU is to continue from where its predecessor left off in order to promote unity and solidarity in Africa, to improve the living conditions of Africans and to defend the hard-won freedom and sovereignty of African countries.

The struggle for the liberation of the African Continent from the yoke of colonialism and apartheid oppression was long and difficult. Countless freedom fighters sacrificed their lives and shed their precious blood during the bitter armed struggles against colonial armies in different countries on the Continent. Here in Namibia too, brave sons and daughters under the banner of SWAPO fought with bravery and gallantry against the troops of apartheid South Africa in many battles, both in Namibian and other countries in southern Africa.

On behalf of the nation, I take this opportunity, as we commemorate Africa Day, to express our profound appreciation to all progressive countries, organisations and individuals, who supported the African people in our struggles to break the chains of colonialism and oppression.

Fellow Namibians,

This year, the theme for the commemoration of Africa Day is: *Africa and the Diaspora*. I believe that this theme creates a good opportunity for us, as Africans to examine the role that the African Diaspora has played and continues to play in the socio-economic development and advancement of our Continent.

The role that the African Diaspora plays in Africa's development efforts has been recognised within the African Union.

In order to accommodate the role of the African Diaspora in the continent's development endeavours, the African Union amended its Constitutive Act in 2003. The amendment also sought to clarify the fundamental relationship between the AU and the Diaspora and to invite the Diaspora to join the AU in its unification efforts. Article 3(q) of the amended Constitutive Act of the AU states that "the AU hereby invites and encourages the full participation of the African Diaspora as an important part of our Continent, in the building of the African Union".

The AU has defined the Africa Diaspora as “the people of African descent and heritage, living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship, and who remain committed to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union”.

I believe that the recognition of the Diaspora as an important partner in Africa’s development creates the needed space for people of African descent all over the world to contribute towards ongoing efforts by the continent of Africa to overcome poverty, underdevelopment, hunger and other challenges.

Such contributions will also enhance the capacity of African nations to expand the provision of education, health care, potable water, housing and sanitation and other basic amenities.

In this connection, it is important to note that in 2008, the African Union launched the *African Diaspora Health Initiative*, as a platform by which health experts in the African Diaspora can transfer information, skills, and expertise to their counterparts on the continent. The aim is to link specific health expertise within the Diaspora with specific health needs in specific geographical locations in Africa.

In addition, the African Diaspora can also play a vital role in boosting economic development in Africa. This can be achieved through the facilitation of investments in the small and medium enterprises sector as well as in industrial projects aimed at broadening the manufacturing and industrial base in African countries.

Furthermore, the expertise and the financial capital that the African Diaspora has access to should be harnessed to add value to the vast natural resources in African countries. In this manner, African countries can reduce the export of our mineral and other natural resources in raw form to other countries.

Value addition is particularly important because it can contribute significantly to the creation of local employment opportunities, as well as to the transfer of skills and appropriate technology in Africa.

It is also important to note that the African Diaspora has been accommodated within the machinery of the African Union through the *Economic, Social and Cultural Commission* (ECOSOCC) of the AU. Out of the 150 seats on the ECOSOCC General Assembly, 20 are allocated to representatives of organisations from the Diaspora. ECOSOCC is a vehicle for building strong partnerships between Governments and all segments of African civil society.

Fellow Namibians,

I believe that the onus is on all of us to ensure that the objective of making the African Diaspora an effective component in the development of our continent is realised. As such, the AU Commission and all relevant institutions should continue to do all that is necessary to ensure that the African Diaspora is given the opportunity and the platform to make their contributions to the social and economic development of Africa.

As we reflect on the vision of Pan Africanists who championed the ideals of African unity, let us recommit ourselves to the promotion and maintenance of democracy, peace, and stability on our continent.

It is only in an atmosphere of peace and stability that we can achieve social and economic development for our people. Let us commemorate this occasion of Africa Day in the spirit of peace and unity. Let us view this day as an opportunity to join hands with other Africans to confront the challenges facing our continent. Through unity of purpose, we can overcome poverty, underdevelopment and diseases that afflict many Africans today.

I wish you all a peaceful Africa Day.

Long Live the African Union!

Long Live Africa!

Long Live the Republic of Namibia!

I thank you.