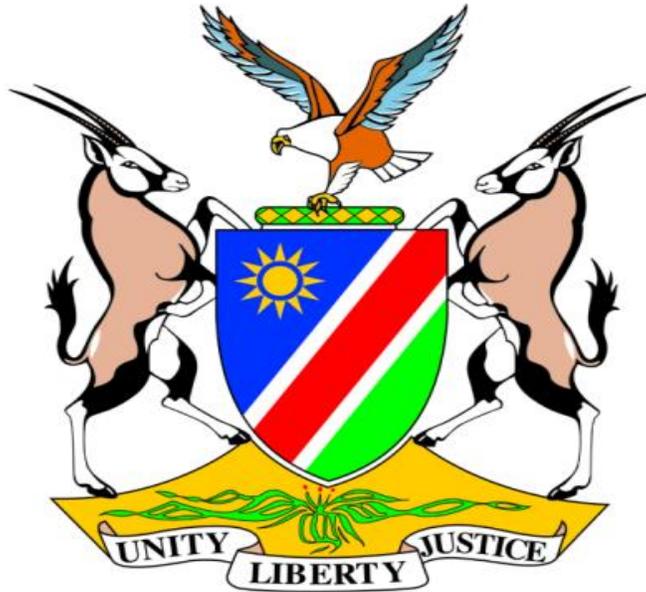


REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR HAGE GEINGOB, PRESIDENT OF
THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE 28TH
INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION**

TSUMEB

MARCH 21, 2018

ACCOMPLISHING THE TASK OF UNITY AND SHARED PROSPERITY

Check against delivery

Directors of Ceremonies,

- 1. Honourable Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation;**
- 2. Honourable Stanley Simataa, Minister of Information and Communication Technology**

Comrade Nangolo Mbumba, Vice President of the Republic of Namibia and Madam Mbumba;

Comrade Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma, Founding President and Founding Father of the Namibian Nation;

Comrade Hifikepunye Pohamba, Former President of the Republic of Namibia and Madam Pohamba;

Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly, Prof. Peter Katjavivi and Madam Katjavivi;

Your Lordship, Peter Shivute Chief Justice and Judge Shivute;

Madam Monica Geingos, First Lady of the Republic of Namibia;

Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers;

Honourable Members of Parliament;

Honourable Henock Kankoshi, Governor of the Otjikoto Region;

Honourable Governors present here,

Your Worship Cllr. Matheus Hangula, Mayor of Tsumeb;

Comrade Honourable Sophia Shaningwa, Secretary General of the SWAPO Party,

Hon. McHenry Venaani, Leader of the Official Opposition and Leaders of other Political Parties in Parliament;

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Distinguished Service Chiefs;

Esteemed Religious, Traditional and Community Leaders;

Veterans of the Liberation Struggle;

Members of the Media;

Fellow Namibians;

Today is our Independence Day. We are convening here in the copper town of Tsumeb in the picturesque Oshikoto region, coming from all corners of the country to be together as citizens of this great country. What binds us here in this town, a melting pot of cultures, sitting at the intersection of our liberation struggle, is our love for Namibia. It is a fitting geography to give credence to the theme of our 28th Independence Anniversary, "United we stand, for the love of Namibia."

Twenty-eight years ago, we witnessed our Founding Father, Comrade Sam Shafishuna Nujoma before a global audience proclaiming: "As from today, we are the masters of this vast land of our ancestors. The destiny of this country is now fully in our own hands. We should therefore look forward to the future with confidence and hope."

This mobilizing statement by Comrade Sam Nujoma captures the meaning of our independence and how far we have come. It underscores a watershed moment in our young nation's history. It is why March 21, Independence Day must and will always be accorded the highest significance.

On Independence Day, each and every Namibian should partake in the activities, pause and reflect about the heroic efforts of our brave sons and daughters. Namibians, holding hands broke collectively the shackles of physical, political and economic enslavement, opening the doors to our freedom and a future of possibilities.

Fellow Namibians,

This is also a fitting occasion to unpack the true meaning of independence. Why is the meaning of independence of consequence? When we, as freedom fighters, came to the realization that “we would have to be our own liberators”, what we had in mind was a better future for all Namibians, beyond the “flag and the national anthem”. We envisioned a nation that one day would be able to turn the blood, sweat and tears of struggle into a shared vision of prosperity for all.

What we sought was the complete emancipation of each and every Namibian. Our goal was to unite the people of our vast land, irrespective of race, religion, gender or ethnic origin – for a democratic, vibrant and peace-loving nation to prosper.

There were no textbooks to prepare us for accomplishing the task of development, and shared prosperity after independence. But our conscience and actions animated our conviction that we needed to build a new Namibia. A Namibia in which the chains of the injustices of the past would be broken and the protection of each citizen the reason why a Government is elected became a reality. We wanted a Namibia in which government policies set-us

on course towards nation building, social progression and economic advancement. We are building that Namibia.

Fellow Namibians,

I should remind you that prosperity for the majority of our citizens is the only insurance for sustainable peace. A country where inequality still exists cannot be successful. As I always emphasize, inclusivity spells harmony - and exclusivity spells conflict.

After 28 years, it is time to take stock, assess the road going forward and see how best we can accomplish the urgent tasks of unity and shared prosperity. Peace and unity are important preconditions for our collective success as a nation.

A legacy of purposeful leadership has enabled our country to remain united, peaceful and stable. Our Founding Father laid the bases for democracy, tolerance and development by pursuing a policy of reconciliation and nation building.

The progress witnessed under Comrade Nujoma's leadership was consolidated under the stewardship of Namibia's second President, Comrade Hifikepunye Pohamba. Due to the efforts of these two icons, Namibia is a beacon of peace and stability on the continent. Namibians today are able to enjoy fundamental freedoms. Our democratic edifice is solid. Processes, systems and institutions support our robust Governance Architecture.

We have witnessed rapid progress since independence with the infrastructure of Apartheid dismantled and more Namibians encouraged to expect and to demand more from their Government. I agree, citizens should expect nothing but quality public services.

Since assuming office as Head of State, I have, after speaking to Namibians in town-hall meetings, rolled-out the Harambee Prosperity Plan as an implementation tool of the 2014 Swapo Party Manifesto. A narrative around nation building and inclusivity, and fast-tracking the National Development Plan is now part of our Governance Architecture. .

We have made tangible gains in infrastructure provision, social protection, economic advancement and effective governance. Recently, our roads were rated the best in Sub-Saharan Africa. Poverty rates have fallen; more children are in school; and better social services are provided to the majority.

I am the first to admit that we would have loved to sustain a higher rate of progress and implementation. But we had to contend with independent intervening variables beyond our control. The past four years have been fraught with “headwinds”, brought about by a global economic downturn, characterized by falling commodity prices and exchange rate fluctuations. This “perfect storm” as some have termed it has had a direct impact on our economy and revenue base.

We have as a result implemented the biggest expenditure cuts since independence. We are aware that some of the necessary interventions have hurt small businesses and led to job losses. It is why as government, we are

encouraging small and medium enterprises to diversify their business portfolio.

Exceptional circumstances have obliged us to review priorities. We are the people of the land of the brave. The Republic remains intact - but the reality of the economic downturn has necessitated new thinking in Government on how to ensure a diverse and inclusive growth model, based on fiscal prudence and sustainability to weather turbulent economic storms. We are now at a critical stage and all hands are needed on deck, in order to create the conditions for broad based economic growth.

In his paper titled *Freedom and Development*, Julius Mwalimu Nyerere argues rightly: "Development brings freedom, provided it is development of the people. But people cannot be developed; they can only develop themselves."

Namibians are yearning for socio-economic development. As a government for the people and by the people, we have to deliver on their legitimate expectations. Freedom and liberty should lead to greater social justice for the majority. We, the people of the land of the brave will find solutions to youth unemployment. We, the people of the land of the brave shall find common purpose on the vexing questions of land reform and broad-based economic empowerment.

I can assure you that it won't be easy. But we must all bear in mind that there are no short cuts to progress and prosperity. Every Namibian will have to actively participate in bringing about genuine change and structural

transformation within our economy. Genuine change would require that we enter into a contract of rights and responsibilities.

It would require unified efforts and commitment spurred on by patriotism. We must stand together, united for the love of Namibia. Finger-pointing, playing the blame game or passing the buck should be avoided. Let us therefore hold hands and place national interest and the pursuit of shared prosperity above self-interest.

In this Year of Reckoning, we should guard against the existence of “Silo Mentalities” across Government Ministries, Agencies and Offices and the overall lack of cooperation and coordination between officials. We must equally guard against tribalism and racism.

The Namibia we fought for belongs to all of us, and we will not allow the retrogressive mentalities to return to our land. We will not allow those who propagate the divisive Bantustan mentality of the past, to gain a foothold in our society. We either embrace unity in order to move forward as a nation, or we choose division, pouring scorn on the memory of the brave sons and daughters who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. We have to choose unity.

Fellow Namibians,

Government has high hopes to deliver on development and for the prosperity of our people. We are aware that if we are to deliver these results, we will need to tackle corruption, crime and poor implementation of policies and

programmes. It is disheartening to note that allegations and perceptions of corruption continue to taint our Government. This has led to the public losing faith and confidence in a few Government Ministries and Agencies. We cannot allow corruption to sabotage 28 years of progress. Corruption undermines stability and social cohesion.

Let us adopt the fraternal characteristics of sharing and looking out for those in our society who are entrenched in poverty, for as Nobel Prize in economics Prof. Joseph Stiglitz states, "Growth that is not shared, will not be sustainable". We should therefore all mobilize around the goals of tackling inequality and unemployment which have been derived from the fact that our economic growth has neither been sufficiently inclusive nor generating enough jobs. That being said, interventions aimed at addressing these inherent imbalances should therefore be supported. My State of the Nation on 11 April will provide more detail about our activities.

Of late, it has been upsetting to note the frequency of reports of violent crime, mainly aimed at the most vulnerable members of our society. I direct our security services to ensure that the safety and security of the people of Namibia, as well as that of our friends and visitors is guaranteed.

As Namibians, we have much to be thankful for and much to look forward to. For 28 years we have remained resolute in upholding the values of unity and peace. These values have served us well during the difficult times we have faced. We are now at a pivotal point in our nation's history. The road ahead is filled with countless opportunities for Namibians to establish themselves as a people of character, a people of purpose, and a people with a shared destiny.

One of the Founding Fathers of the African Revolution, Kwame Nkrumah summed up the purpose of independence by saying: "We wanted to free our people from arbitrary rule, and to give them the freedom to choose the kind of government they felt would best serve their interests and enhance their welfare." Namibians have enjoyed the freedom to choose their preferred government. The road has not been easy. No one said it would be easy. But we have delivered on our promises. Our track record speaks for itself.

One of the primary points of this Government has been to address the scourge of poverty. In 2015, we took a decision to increase the old age pension by 66 percent over a two-year period. This grant is truly transformational in nature, as it not only benefits the elderly but helps to arrest childhood poverty. On 30 June 2016, the first food bank was opened in Katutura. Today close to 100 thousand Namibians had become recipients of the much-needed food on a monthly basis. We believe that this action alone will make a dent in the percentage of people living with hunger poverty.

We still have many mountains to climb and frontiers of possibility to pursue. I have no doubt that if we pull together as one, remain steadfast in the pursuit of a great country, and adopt a unified approach towards achieving our national aspirations; it will not be long before we accomplish the goal of shared prosperity.

Fellow Namibians,

Let us stand united, as one Namibia, as one Nation. Let us look forward, hold hands and contribute to progress in whichever way we can. Let us renew our commitment to Namibia and pull together in the same direction under the sanctuary of our Namibian House.

Long live the people of Namibia.

Long live the Namibian revolution.

Long live the Republic of Namibia

I thank you