

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. HAGE G. GEINGOB, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC
OF NAMIBIA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE MTC/HUAWEI 10TH ANNIVERSARY GALA
DINNER AND HANDING OVER OF HOUSING DONATION.

WINDHOEK COUNTRY CLUB RESORT
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Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to join you at this decennial anniversary of the MTC/Huawei partnership. This partnership is indicative of the all-weather friendship shared between the Republic of Namibia and the People's Republic of China. It is also an example of the results of South-South cooperation, where two telecommunications partners have joined forces to bring world class technologies to Namibia while contributing to the wellbeing of society. Not only is technology prevalent and powerful than ever, it is also evolving at a rapid rate.

It has been said that, "Once a new technology rolls over you, if you're not part of the steamroller, you're part of the road." In other words, we cannot afford to be left behind in the technology race. To achieve the tenets of the AU Agenda 2063, it is pertinent that we encourage, support and foster technological progress on the continent, to augment economic growth and stimulate positive social change. Companies such as MTC and Huawei, are at the forefront of ensuring that in Namibia, we maintain pace with technological developments by staying ahead of the technology growth curve.

Namibia has adopted Vision 2030, with the goal to improve the quality of life of the people of Namibia to the level of their counterparts in the developed world, by 2030. Amongst the themes identified by Government as crucial to this vision, are Knowledge, Innovation, Information and Technology. In this regard, I am pleased that MTC has over the years made its fair contribution to Namibia's current technological state. However, technology is forever changing, and the challenge is to continue keeping up with the pace of change while delivering affordable and world class technologies that enable Namibians to improve their lives.

The partnership between MTC and Huawei, which is a world leader in the provision of information and communications technology, infrastructure and smart devices, is commendable. This partnership has played a role in ensuring that Namibians have access to the latest in mobile communication technology and ensuring that we remain at par with our global peers. While we encourage smart partnerships between Namibian businesses and foreign businesses, it is important that these partnerships and relations must be mutually beneficial, and that Namibians benefit in the short and long-term.

One of the main reasons why Namibia has been able to promote and support the advancement of the latest telecommunications technology is due to the fact that Government has, since independence, laid the groundwork for a conducive business and investment climate through the establishment of sound Governance and Macro-Economic architectures. We have also made significant progress, most notably in the improvement of requisite infrastructures. Areas that were isolated prior to independence are now connected via road networks and electricity grids. Despite these tremendous achievements, we are now faced with the challenge of establishing a sound Socio-Economic architecture. Scourges such as poverty, land distribution, housing and generational income disparities continue to provide serious challenges.

We are well aware that the housing backlog in Namibia is ever increasing. I am informed that the number of shacks are estimated at 500,000 and growing by the day. Housing and the issue of land is one of our top priorities. It is for this reason that I initiated the recently held Land Conference, in order to address the issue of land head on. Part of dealing with the problem is to call it by its name. The situation in informal settlements is a humanitarian crisis. There is no other way to look at it. Government will declare it an emergency in order to oblige relevant stakeholders to mobilize resources and accelerate implementation of conference resolutions.

When it comes to issues such as poverty, land and housing, it will require the collective will of all Namibians, both in public and private sector, individuals and businesses, to come together and make a contribution to help those less fortunate. We cannot give up on the fight until every Namibian is in a place they can call home and feel safe. With so many challenges and dangers confronting shack dwellers, life is difficult and undignified. Shack fires, unstable family lives and lack of electricity are just some of the challenges they face on a daily basis. These are Namibians with real problems and who lack the basic necessities. These are our brothers and sisters. We cannot stand by idly while they suffer. We can no longer be part of a society which turns a blind eye to the agony of others. If we witness social injustice and choose to do nothing about it, we are part of the problem and not the solution.

For that reason, let us hold hands and work towards finding a solution to these problems. This should begin by showing empathy towards our compatriots in need. Let us recall the wise words of the late President Nelson Mandela who said, "Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life." Today I am happy that in a few seconds, MTC and Huawei will jointly make a significant contribution to Namibia's housing problem. I do not wish to spoil the surprise, but on behalf of so many homeless Namibians, as your President, I accept this very noble gesture which will be revealed soon. Moreover, as we enter this festive period, I encourage every Namibian with the means to stretch out a hand to help the needy, not as a gesture of charity, but in the interest of helping your fellow Namibian.

With these few words, I thank you and wish you all a joyous festive season. God's blessings and a Happy New Year.