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THE PRESIDENCY

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WINDHOEK

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Editorial in the Namibian Sun “Is Geingob overly scrutinized?” (2 March 2020) is entirely misleading and spitefully undermines the message of unity of President Hage G. Geingob

At the invitation of newly elected Omukwanillwa Fillemon Shuumbwa Nangolo, the President of the Republic of Namibia, His Excellency, Dr. Hage G. Geingob paid on 29 February 2020 a courtesy visit to the Ondonga Traditional Authority. The visit is the first on the part of President Geingob to the Authority since Omukwaniilwa Nangolo was inaugurated as Leader on 29 June 2019. The visit and message of well wishes to Omukwaniilwa Nangolo has been received positively across the country. More important, President Geingob, emphasizing the importance of consolidating a united and inclusive Namibian House, shared his vision about the role of Traditional Authorities in promoting development and unity, preserving culture and upholding traditional values in communities.

In light of the above, it is wholly regrettable to note that the Namibian Sun chose to plant the seeds of division in its editorial (“Is Geingob overly scrutinized?”, 2 March 2020), when in essence, the record and transparent level of engagement of President Geingob with Traditional Authorities is unblemished. President Geingob maintains an open-door policy with Traditional Authorities, and accords high priority to the issues they table to the Presidency. It is why Leaders of Traditional Authorities participated in large numbers in the Town Hall Meetings of the President in 2015/16 and most recently in July/August 2019. Also, President Geingob, upon request of Traditional Leaders, had meetings with the Authorities on the margins of the formal Town Hall Meetings.

To further demonstrate that the Editorial of the Namibian Sun is blatantly false, in the same month of February 2020, in which President Geingob paid a courtesy visit to the Ondonga Traditional Authority, the Head of State received at State House for three hours on 19 February 2020 a delegation of the Ovaherero Traditional Authority under their Ombara Otjitambi Vekuii Rukoro. Contrary to the fabrications the editorial of the Namibian Sun wishes to propagate, the Ombara Otjitambi Vekuii Rukoro singled out President Geingob and Vice President Nangolo Mbumba for praise with regard to the speed with which both leaders accord meetings to the Authority. The Namibian Sun

was invited to the meeting at State House, of which that particular segment was entirely open to the media. Such praise is deliberately omitted in newspapers, and the Sun chose in this specific case marginal expression on social media, which is not reflective of the views of Traditional Authorities. Evidently, the Namibian Sun did not rush with an editorial making the claim that President Geingob accords preference to the Ovaherero Traditional Authority. On 29 July 2017, President Geingob delivered the keynote address at the Masubia Annual Cultural Festival at Bukalo Village, which further attests to the fair and open manner with which President Geingob engages with all Traditional Authorities.

Without question, an editorial is nothing but an opinion on the issues of the day. Still, an opinion in one of the main newspapers in the country should be credible. It should be supported by facts and empirical evidence (and not fiction). It should not turn outrageous claims on social media for talking points for the day. If the agenda does not permit, President Geingob sends messages of condolences and delegates national leaders to deliver messages on his behalf at funerals, including at events. This includes traditional leaders who don't feature in newspapers. The communities concerned express their appreciation, which shows that the President carries out these humane acts out of respect for the families, the communities and not general publicity.

On 19 August 2019, President Geingob delivered the Keynote speech at the Official Opening of the 22nd Annual Meeting of the Council of Traditional Leaders, and all the Authorities expressed appreciation for the diligent, respectful and fair manner with which President Geingob continues to deal with Traditional Authorities. The historical record is there for consultation and the views of the Council of Traditional Leaders should carry more weight compared to 2 tweets on social media. It is how the weight of evidence works.

President Geingob will continue to emphasize nation building and social cohesion, a message the President communicates consistently without fear or favor to all Traditional Authorities, and the nation at large. Advancing unnecessary division as the Namibian Sun attempted in its editorial today is harmful to the vision of an inclusive and united Namibian House, a cause to which President Geingob will continue to invest energy as a servant-leader of the Namibian people.

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