



**CLOSING STATEMENT BY THE  
HON. DR THEO-BEN GURIRAB, MP AND  
SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY  
AT THE SECOND SESSION OF THE  
CHILDRENS' PARLIAMENT**

**9 MAY 2008**

**Check Against Delivery**

Fellow Members of Parliament,  
Learners,  
Friends and Partners,

This moment comes, after a conclusion of business, whether after serious deliberations or after fun and games. Here I have in mind the end of the Second Session of the Children's Parliament. Obviously and by all accounts, yours, like the first Parliament, represented some serious work and many hours of debating and weighing of alternative outcomes.

All of us, parents, teachers and children agree fully that education is vital for the society. Education is the key to empowerment. Empowerment opens up opportunities to knowledge, information, employment, inspiration for self-development and prosperity which solves some problems.

You heard me making a joke about Bill Gates, calling him a school drop-out. Bill might have walked away from the formal education system in the USA, but endless opportunities awaited him outside. Today, Bill and his wife Mathilda Gates are putting their money to good use in the fields of internet, education, HIV/AIDS, women's entitlement and child welfare. They are generously assisting others, including many in Namibia. Even outside of school system, where the society offers through institutions and easy flow of useful information, individuals and groups are encouraged to find their own ways for self-betterment and they succeed.

When I thought of putting in place this programme, I thought about young Namibians in terms of access to knowledge, technological information and functional skills. But it is for you yourselves to be self-liberators and it can happen. I and many others, who started out against virtually insurmountable odds in Namibia, moved on and made success of our lives one way or another. I am aware that to be "born-free" doesn't make you children living in a land of milk and honey. Nationbuilding is still young for that.

When some of us proudly call you "born-frees", we are happy that horrible things and pain we had endured will never be your burdens. You will face your own challenges which you must confront and overcome. As your leaders and parents, we have a duty to help ease any hardships and challenges, while we keep on saying to you, yes you can, don't be afraid to fail, go on and be positive that you can also become winners.

For, it is not failure per se which prevents progress but fear to rise up and try again until you succeed. Experience makes us neither wise nor prosperous. What it does is to know where dead-ends and pitfalls are and hyenas are lurking. We know so because we were there and can share that insight with you. The rest is really yours to make history and win your own battles. But we will always be there for you.

My own idea for bringing you together in Windhoek is two-fold. The first is because of the teacher in me who refuses to call it a day. The second is for a lad from Usakos, who got to virtually see the whole world and has witnessed similarities and differences among human beings all over the world. It has been a unique encounter which is exceptionally rewarding for me and my contemporaries. I have since been walking around with that consciousness on my mind. Knowledge not shared is a dead resource.

By bringing together young people, from all thirteen regions of Namibia, I have been thinking of you as a united nations of contact, embrace, friendship and hopefully a lasting companionship which will last into the future. Something almost like this happened for my generation. Girls and boys from all regions of Namibia during my boyhood converged at Augustineum, Okahandja and at the nearby Döbra as young students.

To date, we have kept memories of those days and treat one another as inseparable, living linkages. I have that point of reference as a model but there is more. The struggle to free Namibia was another way to further our interconnectivity. At the time some of us were given a crowning task as founding drafters of our Constitution, I personally came to realize, at that stage as I do today, that everything we stood for was worth the sacrifices and the long and bitter struggle that put us in prison and exile.

Bringing you together, even if I and others who have spoken to you, did not say anything worthwhile, that alone would make me happy. You are leaders already today for what you are. In all that you are, you are taking up public responsibility for yourselves and for the country. Some of you will soon further advance your lives to higher levels, leaving behind the Children's Parliament. I hope, as I have said on several occasions, that we are looking forward to a permanent structure and an ongoing institutional set-up for Children's Parliament as soon as possible. I know this is easier said than done.

Once that happens, the student participants themselves must drive the process forward. We must yet, however, answer the question: "How can students who are full-time learners become, at the same time, full-time MPs of Children's Parliament? Think about that in terms of constructing, managing and costing of its foundation and evolution as a permanent House.

You have been wonderful. I set aside my routine business as Speaker of National Assembly to follow your deliberations and truly exciting and instructive interactions among you in the Chamber. I trust you have been keeping alive those exchanges at other places where you were relaxing. My hope is that each one of you has found among yourselves persons whose ideas coincide or are at variance with yours. Either way, maintain the contacts beyond Windhoek. And when you are in Windhoek or from wherever you might be, let's hear from you. We will treasure the idea that you were here.

The implementable and otherwise motions you have formulated, debated and approved call for consideration. We will study them and transmit the relevant ones to the intended destinations. The Office of the Speaker will put in our best efforts to ensure that this initiative stays alive on the track and that it will become a reality at an appropriate time. The two experiments, this one and the last year's, have given us sufficient data and plenty of food for thought. We need to deeply digest the material and plan ahead, taking into consideration all and sundry, and with our minds on what is to be done. We need ample time to draw up a roadmap.

That is why I have decided for us to take a two-year break. We don't intend, I personally promise you, to abandon what we have started. My fellow national leaders, parents, cooperating partners, well-wishers and you all have underscored the point that Children's

Parliament is an excellent idea whose time has come. Why would anybody want to kill it at this stage? No! We will continue to move forward. Let me now, in general terms, comment on some of the motions. I first want to note that the motions cover a broad and diverse field of social and policy issues.

Good luck and happy journey back to your stations. Keep up the good work. I am proud of you all.

Godspeed until we meet again!