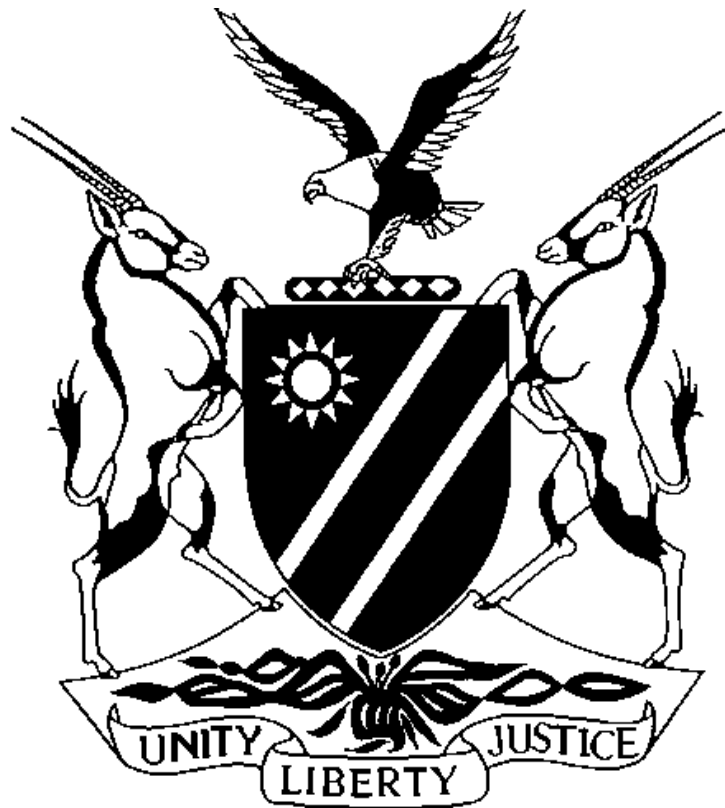


# REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY,  
HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBA, PRESIDENT OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 3<sup>rd</sup> SESSION OF  
NAMIBIA'S 5<sup>TH</sup> PARLIAMENT**

**15 FEBRUARY 2011**

**WINDHOEK**

*Check Against Delivery*

Honourable Dr Theo-Ben Gurirab, Speaker of the National Assembly,  
Honourable Asser Kapere, Chairperson of the National Council,  
Your Excellency, Founding President and Father of the Namibian Nation, Comrade Dr Sam Nujoma,  
Right Honourable Nahas Angula, Prime Minister,  
Your Honour Chief Justice Peter Shivute,  
Right Honourable First Prime Minister, Dr Hage Geingob,  
Honourable Members of Parliament,  
Distinguished Service Chiefs,  
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,  
Honourable Samuel Nuuyoma, Governor of Khomas Region,  
Distinguished Invited Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am grateful to the Honourable Speaker for his kind words of welcome. At the same time, I wish to express the profound sense of honour and privilege that I feel to stand before this Joint Session to officially open the 3<sup>rd</sup> Session of the 5<sup>th</sup> Parliament of the Republic of Namibia.

As customary, the three organs of the State are represented at this occasion, demonstrating the strength of our democracy and the enduring principles of the separation of powers to ensure accountability. Since the attainment of our nationhood in 1990, our nation has continued to grow from strength to strength, entrenching democracy and consolidating our institutional frameworks for governance. This has in turn, consolidated socio-political peace and stability and facilitated the delivery of public services to our people.

Honourable Speaker,  
Honourable Chairperson,

In the history of nations, our democracy is still relatively young. After all, we will celebrate our nation's 21<sup>st</sup> Independence Anniversary only this year. Despite this relative youth, we are all proud of the achievements that we have recorded and the milestones that we have achieved over the years. We are also cognizant of the many challenges that our nation faces in the process of nation building and in shaping the destiny of our Motherland.

On an occasion such as this one, our nation should pause to reflect and ponder about our common future. We must ask ourselves the critical questions regarding the direction in which our nation is going; the goals and objectives that we aim to achieve; the strategies that we have adopted to achieve our goals as well as the pace at which we are advancing towards our chosen destiny. This constant introspection is necessary for us to stay focused and remain on the right track, to sharpen our approaches, and to ensure that the tools that we use are effective to achieve the required outcomes. Compatriots, it is essential to ensure that we always aim at, and indeed hit the right targets. This is what the noble task of nation building demands from all Namibians and particularly from those of us in leadership positions in the Executive, Legislative and the Judiciary branches of the state.

We have an obligation and a duty to serve the nation to the best of our individual and collective abilities at all times. After all, we have taken oaths of office to do just that. As servants of the people, we are accountable to them in all that we do. We have no other choice, but to ensure that the policies that we put in place, the laws that we enact and all the decisions that we take in our respective areas of responsibility are aimed at enhancing the well-being of our nation.

While the doctrine of the separation of powers between the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary is constitutionally ordained, the three branches must continue to work together for effective implementation of policies, the enactment of responsive laws and an efficient administration of justice.

We must also, within our areas of responsibility and competence, do everything in our powers to combat unemployment, poverty, under-development, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, crime, corruption and to address other socio-economic issues that require the urgent attention of the Government.

Honourable Speaker,  
Honourable Chairperson,

Parliament is the central pillar of our democracy, hence the need for it to live up to the noble expectation as the embodiment of the will of our people which is practically expressed through the enactment of laws that are aimed at improving the living conditions of all our people.

All branches of Government should build on the existing momentum to bring about better and faster public service delivery.

We should plan better; act faster and most importantly, provide innovative solutions to deliver quality education, health care, housing, land reform, electricity, potable water, and indeed other public services and social amenities.

We have noted the good work of this Parliament over the years. Thus, I commend our lawmakers for working hard and with admirable dedication during the last session. Records from Parliament indicate that twelve substantive pieces of legislation were tabled covering a wide spectrum of issues. The same number of Motions was also tabled, dealing with current and topical issues of concern to the nation. This is in addition to activities such as outreach activities, Ministerial Papers etc.

Moreover, in keeping with its oversight and accountability functions, Parliament received and dealt with more than 120 Auditor-General's Reports on the financial activities of various public bodies. Financial Reports of various State-Owned enterprises, statutory and regulatory bodies were also tabled and considered by both the National Assembly and the National Council.

In addition, Parliament continued to popularize its work among the members of the broader public. I am informed that these outreach initiatives including the Children's Parliament will be expanded during this Session. The Children's Parliament will take place during the month of May and will be attended by not less than four school children from each of the thirteen administrative regions of the country. I commend our Parliament for exposing our children to the workings of our Parliament at a tender age.

I believe that the initiative has an added advantage of expanding civic awareness and responsibility among our young people, while moulding them for leadership positions in the future. I encourage the Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Chairperson of the National Council and indeed all Members of Parliament to continue with these noble endeavors.

May I also request you, Honourable Members, to identify other innovative and practical ways in which Parliament and its work can be further popularized among the masses of our people. This is necessary to create a well-informed nation; where citizens are equipped with the right information and are empowered to make informed decisions on matters that affect their lives.

Parliament should also consider suggestions and inputs from citizens to enrich the legislative process. This can be achieved through public hearings and consultations before laws are enacted.

In the final analysis, our Parliament should not be seen as a distant institution which is far removed from the daily struggles of ordinary Namibians. Rather, it should always be positioned as a relevant and visible reality in the lives of the people. This is the essence of democracy and it should be deepened to make our Parliamentary democracy more meaningful to the nation.

Honourable Speaker,  
Honourable Chairperson,

The task of addressing the socio-economic challenges that we face rests on all our shoulders. It requires the contribution of each and every one of us, including this Honourable House.

At this juncture, I wish to recognize the ongoing contributions of our Parliament to the socio-economic development of our nation, as evidenced, among other things, by the forward-looking Bills tabled for debate. For this Session, the Bills slated to be tabled include:

- Appropriation Bill for the 2011/2012 Financial Year;
- Seed and Seed Varieties Bill;
- Plant Breeders and Farmers' Rights Bill;
- Flexible Land Tenure Bill;
- Earth Sciences Bill;
- Pension Funds Amendment Bill;
- Long-Term Insurance Amendment Bill;
- Unit Trusts Control Amendment Bill;
- Inspection of Financial Institutions Amendment Bill;
- Income Tax Amendment Bill;
- Statistics Bill and others.

These Bills are designed to have a positive impact on the lives of our people and the socio-economic development of our nation once enacted. To begin with, the Appropriation Bill, which is tabled before the commencement of each Financial Year, is one of the most important tools in the hands of Government for purposes of planning, service delivery and governance. It outlines the public investment priorities of the Government for each Financial Year.

I will say more on the public spending and investment priorities of Government for the 2011/2012 Financial Year during the State of the Nation Address, after debate on the Appropriation Bill by the National Assembly.

I will, as the Constitution dictates, use that occasion to report to this august house, and through you, to the nation about the activities of Government during the current Financial Year as well as our planned activities during the ensuing Financial Year.

Honourable Speaker,  
Honourable Chairperson,

This occasion is taking place at a time when our nation is looking to Government with great anticipation to provide answers to the pressing issues of the day. These include the question of unemployment; the needed improvements in the provision of quality education, health care, housing, access to land and other social amenities. I assure the nation that our Government is actively attending to these concerns and other preoccupations of the nation.

We will do more in the coming Financial Year to bring about tangible improvements to the current situation. I should say that, I am confident that this ship called Namibia remains on course and that together, we will weather the storm.

I have directed the Honourable Minister of Finance to ensure that the reform of the public procurement system is finalized soonest so that this sector can play its role of boosting economic performance.

Similarly, I would like to see the completion of the review and modernization of the Foreign Investment Act of 1990. This crucial legislation is critical to improve our country's competitiveness as an attractive location for foreign investments. The inflow of investments into our country will in turn contribute to the transfer of skill, creation of wealth and creation of new employment opportunities.

I call upon all Namibians, in all our respective capacities, to employ all the means at our disposal, and to harness the available technical, financial and natural resources in order to effectively fight and defeat the problem of unemployment. This is one of the greatest challenges facing our country today. Let us all rise to the occasion and overcome this challenge.

I would like to make a special call to the private sector to engage more meaningfully in efforts to create sustainable employment opportunities by expanding their operations and investing in value addition ventures.

There are many investment opportunities in sectors such as food production and agro-processing and other areas. Local investors should therefore venture into these areas and take advantage of these opportunities.

Our farmers should also work harder and take advantage of the good rains received so far, to produce more food. As it currently stands, the unemployment rate in this country is unacceptable. It must be tackled from all angles.

Honourable Speaker,  
Honourable Chairperson,

Other proposed Bills that will be tabled this season will also change our society for the better. For instance, the Seed and Seed Varieties Bill will boost our efforts towards improved agricultural productivity. Similarly, the Plant Breeders' and Farmers' Rights Bill will address the concerns of our people as they relate to benefits that can be derived from local biological and genetic diversity.

Equally importantly, the Flexible Land Tenure Bill will enable our people, especially those in urban and peri-urban areas to gain more secure rights to land.

The other Bills that I have mentioned, especially those in the financial sector would lead to greater protection of Namibian consumers and strengthen the regulatory hand of the state, through the relevant regulatory institutions.

I urge the Honourable Members to debate these Bills vigorously and comprehensively so that the final products could serve the best interest of the nation.

Honourable Speaker,  
Honourable Chairperson,

The success of one arm of Government reflects positively on the entire nation. I would, therefore, like to congratulate our Parliament for the recognition it continues to enjoy both regionally and internationally. As the home of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, Namibia is working actively towards the transformation of the Forum into the SADC Parliament, in line with the Windhoek Declaration of 2005. The international profile of our Parliament has also been elevated through the sterling work of our Speaker, Dr Theo-Ben Gurirab, who has been at the helm as President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, IPU, since 2008.

We are proud that under your able leadership, the IPU has truly become a home to many National Parliaments worldwide. We commend you, Dr Gurirab, on this achievement. You have indeed proven yourself as an effective international public servant. Namibia is proud of you.

Honourable Speaker,  
Honourable Chairperson,

The good rains received so far have been a welcome blessing, indeed. However, they have also caused destruction to physical infrastructure such as roads and railways. Private properties and public buildings such as houses, schools and businesses have also been damaged by heavy thunderstorms and winds. I am concerned that levels of our perennial rivers have risen in recent weeks and the floods are threatening. In this context, all necessary measures must be taken to protect human lives. I urge the communities in flood-prone areas to co-operate with Emergency Management Officials and relocate to higher ground. Government will provide the necessary assistance to affected households to ensure smooth and safe relocation.

I call upon the nation to stand together in the face of the damages caused by flooding and heavy rains. Where destruction has occurred, we must rebuild the infrastructure so that normal social and economic activities can continue.

Honourable Speaker,  
Honourable Chairperson,

Yesterday, the High Court delivered judgment in the election application case, in which opposition political parties challenged the outcome of the National Assembly Elections, held in November 2009. The case has demonstrated the resilience and independence of our judiciary system as provided for in our constitution.

It demonstrated that Namibians can agree to disagree within the parameters of the rule of law and that aggrieved parties can seek the adjudication of disputes, of whatever nature, through the courts of law. This is a defining feature of the rule of law. It is an important tenet of multi-party democracy, which is our chosen system of governance.

Once again, let me express the profound sense of honour and privilege that I feel to stand before this august House, to officially open the 3<sup>rd</sup> Session of the 5<sup>th</sup> Parliament.

I am confident that all our lawmakers will do their best to ensure a productive and successful Session. The nation is looking up to you, with justified expectations, to find effective solutions to the problems that we face. I urge you to live up to these expectations and to do your best, at all times, to serve the nation. You have a duty not to fail them.

Honourable Speaker,  
Honourable Chairperson,

Our Parliament should harness its collective wisdom to legislate in the best interests of the nation. Yes, the challenges are many and varied, however, when you, as lawmakers, work together for a common goal and with a shared sense of purpose, no challenge will be too great, and no obstacle will be insurmountable. I take this opportunity to wish our legislature all success in your legislative activities and debates during this Session and beyond.

I now have the pleasure to declare the 3<sup>rd</sup> Session of the 5<sup>th</sup> Parliament of the Republic of Namibia, officially open.

I thank you.