

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS 2015
BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. HAGE G. GEINGOB
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

21 APRIL 2015

WINDHOEK

Honorable Professor Peter Katjavivi, Speaker of the National Assembly,
Honorable Asser Kapere, Chairperson of the National Council,
Your Excellency Dr. Nicky Iyambo, Vice President,
Your Excellency, Comrade Hifikepunye Pohamba, Second President of the Republic of
Namibia,
Right Honorable Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, Prime Minister of the Republic of
Namibia,
Mrs. Monica Geingos, First Lady of the Republic of Namibia,
Honorable Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of
International Relations and Cooperation,
Honorable Peter Shivute, Chief Justice,
Honorable Members of Parliament,
Esteemed Leaders of Political Parties,
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Distinguished Invited Guests,
Members of the Media,
Fellow Namibians,

I would like to commence my address, by extending my warmest congratulations to you, Honorable Katjavivi, on your election as Speaker of our sixth Parliament. Let me also use this opportunity to thank our foremost diplomat and former Speaker, Dr. Theo Ben Gurirab, who has acquitted himself exceptionally well in all the roles assigned to him. Equally, allow me to mention the former Prime Minister, Honourable Nahas Angula, who has left Parliament after helping to draft the constitution and serving Parliament since Namibia's independence. In the same vein, I bid farewell to the former Deputy Prime Minister, Honourable Marco Hausiku and Honourable Katutiire Kaura, two founding Parliamentarians who have retired from this august house.

I am pleased to note that the State of the Nation Address is coinciding with the 1st session of the sixth Parliament. I would also like to extend a warm word of congratulations to the newly elected members of Parliament, especially first time Parliamentarians. It is gratifying to note that this Parliament is the most diverse since Independence. The number of first time MPs is 49% percent. We look forward to fresh perspectives and robust debate.

Due to the 50/50 policy spearheaded by the SWAPO party, women now represent, 48 percent of the National Assembly. Gender equality is an enabler which allows all people to reach their full potential to contribute to and benefit from economic, social, cultural and political participation. It is pertinent that women have greater access to high level decision-making roles.

Honorable Speaker,
Honorable Chairperson,

The Supreme Law of our Republic enjoins the President to give account on the State of the Nation during the consideration of the Appropriation Bill. This is a practice

that has been carried out for the past 24 years under the leadership of our Founding President Comrade Sam Nujoma, as well as my predecessor, Comrade Hifikepunye Pohamba. I wish to commend these two icons for having laid a solid foundation for the development and prosperity of our Republic.

The State of the Nation Address is a constitutional act that reinforces the very essence of our democracy as a Government by the people and for the people.

Honorable Speaker,

Honorable Chairperson,

Nation building is similar to building a house, and in our case, building the Namibian house. Firstly, you clear an area on which you build a solid foundation. You then lay the bricks and use cement to ensure that the bricks are kept in place. Allow the house to dry and firm up. Finally, you plaster the wall and it is important to let it dry before you paint the house.

The same is true for building the Namibian house. We cleared the area with United Nations supervised elections. After which we drafted the constitution as our foundation. The bricks of our house are the different ethnic groups and the mortar is the various laws passed in Parliament to hold us together. Allow the democracy to firm up and mature.

We are intent on building and maintaining a high quality house in which all its residents have a sense of shared identity. We are determined to build a house that will be a place of peace and refuge for all its children and a house in which no Namibian will be left out.

Honorable Speaker,

Honorable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

I am sure you are all aware of the parable of two men who built their respective houses, as narrated in Mathew 7 of the Holy Bible. One of them was foolish and built his house on sand, the other one was wise and built his house on rock. When rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against the house of the wise man it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. Conversely, the house of the foolish man, who built his house on sand collapsed.

In Namibia, we are not foolish. Wise builders have built our Namibian House on rock.

Other aspects of the strong foundation of the Namibian House, Honorable Speaker, Honorable Chairperson, include peace and stability, respect for the rule of law, and good governance.

Without peace and stability in the House, development becomes impossible. We should, therefore, not take our peace and stability for granted. We not only treasure our own peace, we also treasure the peace of others. To this extent, we contribute, within our means, to peace keeping in the world and in particular on our own continent, Africa. I am particularly proud of the peace-keeping role we have played, and continue to play, on the Continent for we are, first and foremost, Africans. Africa stood by us during our long and bitter struggle and in turn we stand by Africa.

We have deepened and strengthened the democratic governance and culture in our Namibian House. Free and fair elections at national and local level have become part of our democratic experience. We are a country where freedom of the media and freedom of speech flourish. In fact, Reporters without Borders has consistently rated Namibia as the country with the freest press on the African continent.

Another strong foundation of our Namibian House is good Governance. It was therefore no surprise that our former President, Hifikepunye Pohamba, received the Mo Ibrahim Award for African leadership. Congratulations once again Comrade President. According to Transparency International, Namibia has remained one of the least corrupt countries in the world. It is important for public officials, to take note that corruption, in any form, whether it is a kickback, commission or any other benefit in the regular execution of duty is unacceptable. Private sector should also take note that by paying a bribe, it perpetuates and entrenches the very corruption it laments.

As a rules-based Nation, we must capacitate and allow our institutions such the Anti-Corruption Commission, the Namibian Police and our Courts to investigate and prosecute cases of corruption without fear or favor.

The Anti-Corruption Commission and the courts are only able to successfully prosecute cases of corruption if they have sufficient evidence. In this regard, I urge service providers to the Government, or any user of Government service to ensure that if he or she is asked for a bribe by a civil servant, not to oblige. Instead, please inform the Anti-corruption Commission and provide them with the necessary evidence. Corruption requires a corrupter and a corruptee. Businesspeople that pay bribes and the civil servants who solicit or receive bribes are engaged in an evil which undermines our development and weakens the fibre of our society.

A key requirement in preventing undue benefits accruing to Public Officials is preventing conflicts of interest and the disclosure of assets. The law does not require the President to disclose his personal assets. However, managing conflict of interest is a matter which requires political will. Therefore, I feel obliged to publicly declare my personal assets.

To this extent, I have engaged PriceWaterHouseCoopers Tax and Advisory Services (PWC) to assist me with an independent assessment of my assets. PWC will also assist me to prepare a financial disclosure report which I will disclose to the public in the second week of May 2015. For the sake of consistency, the First Lady will also disclose her personal assets, despite there being no legal requirement for her to do so. In the same vein of transparency, I will also release my medical health reports for public scrutiny. These disclosures will be made in line with the belief that transparency starts at the top. I am deeply convinced that accountability, transparency and inclusive leadership are "*conditio sine quo non*" for sustained socio-economic development and the improvement of the lives of all our people.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairman,

I trust you will ensure the timely and adequate disclosure of assets by Parliamentarians. I assure you and the Namibian nation that the Prime Minister will ensure that civil servants equally disclose all outside interests and sources of income.

All Ministers and their Deputies will be required to issue Ministerial Declarations of Intent that will constitute a contract with the public on delivery to which they will be held accountable.

Honorable Speaker,
Honorable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

The Namibian House is solid. The foundation is firm. The State of the Nation is healthy. Now it is time to make sure that all who reside in the house, are healthy, well educated, have decent employment and are well nourished. These are basic prerequisites in the maintenance of a harmonious home.

Twenty-five years after independence, we have made significant progress in the fight against poverty. Official statistics shows that the poverty rate declined significantly from 69.3 percent in 1994 to 28.7 percent in 2010. This means that the poverty rate halved during that period. This is unprecedented progress, as globally only a handful of countries have been able to halve poverty over such a short period of time. In absolute terms, more than four hundred thousand Namibians were lifted out of poverty during that period. The introduction of targeted social safety nets, including old age pensions and social grants for people living with disabilities as well as for orphans and vulnerable children have played a significant role in reducing poverty levels in Namibia.

These statistics are testament to the work done in alleviating poverty but the cold facts are that poverty, even at 28.9% is still too high. Poverty at 10% would still be too high. If we were to halve that to 5%, it would still be too high. The war on poverty is focused on eventual eradication so we will not hide behind statics as our focus is on sustained poverty reduction measures.

Research carried out by our National Statistics Agency shows that the old age pension has played a major role in the prevention of childhood poverty. In the absence of an old age pension, the childhood poverty rate would have been ten percent higher than the current figure. That is why one of the first priorities was to increase the old age pension by 66.7 percent from N\$600 per month, to N\$1,000 per month, starting this Financial Year. Further increases will be effected so that old age pension grants reach N\$1,200 by 2017. This has already been factored into the national budget.

Honorable Speaker,
Honorable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

The war against poverty and the quest for economic emancipation must be a multifaceted war which we will fight on many fronts, using a myriad of methods at our disposal. Some of these measures are outlined below.

The first step in the fight against poverty is the recognition that all Namibians deserve a dignified life. A dignified life includes decent employment and decent shelter. This will require the input of Government as well as all employers. Government has and will continue to formulate a legal framework focused on reducing the income gap. What is also required is a mental framework where Namibian employers empathize with and remunerate their employees appropriately. What is required is that all Namibians treat each other with dignity and respect and that all Namibians play their role in uplifting their fellow human being. This sharing mindset in individuals will go a long way in making sure no Namibian is left behind.

In the Namibian House, no child should go hungry. I am committed to the introduction of a Food Bank. The willingness of several farmers to get involved in this initiative on a voluntary basis is indicative of how Namibians recognize that we will only eradicate poverty if we work together.

The Ministry of Poverty Eradication is tasked to co-ordinate all aspects hereto and harness the political will of government and the goodwill of Namibians as a tool in the eradication of poverty.

There is a saying that says, "*Love only grows by sharing. You can only have more for yourself by giving it away to others.*" Let us adopt the virtues of sharing in our Namibian House. Let us allow the spirit of Harambee to manifest itself for the good of all Namibians. We must succeed as One Namibia, one Nation.

Many of the residents of the Namibian House are poor because they don't have a job nor access to proper education or marketable skills. We will, therefore, tackle poverty from all fronts, through safety nets, access to quality education, and by creating jobs and growing the economy. This is why Ministry of Labour has been renamed to the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Job Creation. This renewed focus must ensure that we target one of the root causes of poverty which is unemployment.

The good thing is that our people are not lazy. Our people want to work. Our people will excel when given the opportunity. I would like to acknowledge the role of entrepreneurs whose enterprises create employment opportunities for other. Their efforts must be acknowledged and supported through our development finance institutions such as the Development Bank of Namibia, the SME Bank and the procurement muscle of the State. Political self- determination is meaningless without economic self- determination.

Honorable Speaker,
Honorable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians

A House in which the few are affluent while the rest are poor is not a healthy house. During the past twenty-five years, considerable progress was made in reducing income disparities in Namibia. This was through a mix of pro poor, pro-growth interventions and redistributive policies targeted at the poorest of the poor. The Gini-Coefficient that measures income disparity declined from 0.70 in 1994 to 0.58 in 2010.

Admittedly, one would have liked to see a sharper reduction in the levels of inequality, but what is most important is the fact that we are moving in the right direction. It also shows that it is possible to grow the economic cake.

Due to the structural nature of wealth accumulation, the average Namibian was dispossessed and does not possess much wealth in terms of homes or shareholding. The only way out of this conundrum is to introduce a targeted approach to unpack and reverse the existing structural imbalances. In this regard, I want to appeal to the business community to introduce new co-ownership practices in which workers are able to own shares in the companies they dedicate their labour. This will help them to feel part of the business while at the same time also assist them to begin creating real and long term wealth. These are the principles included in the draft policy framework on Broad-Based Economic Empowerment. The finalization of this policy is overdue and it is time to re-imitate the consultation process on this long outstanding policy framework.

Honorable Speaker,
Honorable Chairperson,

Education remains the greatest equalizer. Nationally, our literacy rate has increased from less than 75 percent at independence to approximately 90 percent, according to the latest Census count of 2011. In some Regions such as Khomas and Erongo, the literacy rate is virtually 100 percent.

We removed school fees in 2012 which made education free at primary school level. This led to a significant increase in enrolment rates at pre-primary and primary school levels.

This year, we are going to introduce free secondary school education, which will enable thousands of young Namibians to have a better shot at a brighter future. This will immediately arrest the high youth unemployment rate.

At the moment, large subsidies to our local tertiary education institutions translate into the State covering up to 80% of university costs. Therefore, the fees payable by Namibian university students are significantly reduced by Government subsidies and make it tantamount to free tertiary education. This, as well as increased funding of scholarships through the Namibia Student Financial Assistance Fund has significantly expanded access to affordable tertiary education.

The private sector, should also contribute more towards building the skills set of our Nation, by providing more scholarships and training to our young adults. When I was on an official visit to China last year, I met with 30 Namibian medical students who were provided full bursaries by a Chinese philanthropist. This is commendable and the contributions of Namibian companies and individuals who provide bursaries are also commended.

In addition to training locally, we continue to send out and support our youth to further their studies in various disciplines at top universities in the world.

Honorable Speaker,
Honorable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

A house that is not healthy cannot be productive. Access to quality and affordable health services is equally important for poverty reduction and economic development. How can we expect sick people to work and to be fully productive? The Namibian House has made great strides in the provision of quality and affordable health services to all our citizens.

The appointment of a practicing medical doctor is a game changer and we expect accelerated improvements in the Health sector.

Honorable Speaker,
Honorable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians

The Namibian House has made solid progress in essential services such as housing and sanitation, and expansion of critical enablers such as electricity, including rural electrification, telecommunications, and the expansion and upgrading of roads, rail lines, ports, dams and airports. This is critical infrastructure needed to keep us competitive in an increasingly globalized world. We must take care of these critical enablers, and this starts with their procurement.

Corrupt practices in the awarding of infrastructure tenders are costly and take away from the enabling function that such infrastructure should play. It can thus not be condoned as it retards our development as a nation.

Honorable Speaker,
Honorable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

I would like to spend a few minutes on the important topics of land and housing in the context of the Namibian House. These are two emotive topics, and sober-minded dialogue is required to mutually find effective and lasting solutions. We all have the same interest at heart and moving in opposing directions seeks to undermine our shared needs. It appears nobody disagrees on the problem of urban and rural land non-availability and lack of decent shelter. What we appear to disagree upon is the modality. The renaming of the Ministry of Land Reform and the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development underscores the importance the new government attaches to this issue.

Firstly, as head of the Household, I want to reaffirm my personal commitment to addressing land reform and provision of affordable housing to all Namibians. Land reform, therefore, remains one of the areas of transformation that is critical towards social justice, inclusion and poverty alleviation in Namibia.

I would like to reiterate that these two important matters should be addressed within the confines of the laws and the constitution of our Republic. Our Constitution permits for the implementation of policies and programs aimed at redressing social imbalances. If we need to align our laws with our constitutional ideals for human dignity and appropriate shelter, that is what we will do. Disobeying the law should never be an option.

Secondly, it is not true that Government has not paid attention to urban and rural land reform. What is perhaps true is that the pace of land reform did not happen at the speed which we would have liked. This was due to numerous legal and technical obstacles which slowed down our progress.

This is true of poverty alleviation and wealth redistribution measures as well. These three issues are closely related and it is opportune to initiate a national dialogue under the over-arching theme of wealth re-distribution. This discourse will be facilitated by the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation in a structured and formalized manner and will include all key Ministries and stakeholders. As President, I will personally chair some of the sessions of the dialogue to ensure that the legitimate concerns of our people are not only heard but also translated into effective strategies and action. I would imagine that the concerns addressed would include issues such as expropriation of land owned by absentee landlords; the restriction of foreigners buying agricultural land; expropriation of urban and agricultural land; construction of dignified dwellings for farm workers. Further discussion points may include the issue of previously disadvantaged Namibians who have become successful farmers, but still carry out farming activities, especially animal husbandry in communal areas. These emerging farmers should graduate to

become successful commercial farmers outside communal areas, as their larger herds of stock puts immense pressure on land in communal areas.

Finally, I would like to remind us all that the Constitution does provide for the expropriation of land, and if and where necessary, we shall invoke the expropriation clause as part of our Government's policy to address a burning national issue such as this one. In addition, to the extent that National Laws are prohibiting development, they will be reviewed and amended to facilitate development.

While on the issue of farming and land, I would like to note that due to poor rainfall this year, our nation faces a looming drought, whose effects will be felt in most, if not all parts of the country. I want to assure the nation that Interim measures will be introduced during the next four months, pending the conclusion of the Final Drought Assessment for the country. An amount of more than N\$300 million has been set aside for this purpose and will cover measures such as: (1) procurement of food for affected communities and households, (2) provision of water for human and animal in the form of drilling new boreholes and rehabilitation of old ones, and (3) assistance to crop producers and livestock farmers.

Honorable Speaker,
Honorable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

To fast track the delivery of affordable and quality houses for all, local authorities, especially those with required capacity, we will have to play a constructive role in the provision of serviced land. To this extent, the Minister of Urban and Rural Development must be commended for investigating errant local authority councilors who are suspected to be abusing their positions of authority for their own benefit as opposed to the common good of the people.

These investigations are not to victimize the innocent or vilify the accused. This is meant to prove or disprove the persistent claims of corruption within institutions tasked with delivering land to the people. Another key issue is ensuring that the costs of serviced land are urgently reduced. An immediate measure is to cut out the middlemen and direct and, if need be, subsidize, municipalities to directly service the land. Thirdly, the criteria for land and property valuations must be re-assessed as it appears that the science behind land valuations is imprecise and leading to anomalies in pricing. The fourth measure will be to investigate the entire supply chain of building materials and costs. The fifth measure involves dissuading speculative behavior in the land and property market, and the focus should be strictly on first time buyers. Finally, where possible, the use of local materials should be promoted as much as possible together with more local manufacturing of building materials.

Honorable Speaker,
Honorable Chairperson,

The numerous programs and policies to address social issues would not have been possible if it was not for the way we have managed the financial and other resources of our Namibian Household. Through the implementation of prudent and smart macroeconomic policies, our economy has performed exceptionally well during the past twenty-five years. The size of our economy has increased and accordingly, the average income per household has also increased. The economy also became more diverse and resilient against internal and external shocks.

According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD], Namibia is a front-runner with respect to economic diversification on the African continent. This was not always the case. At independence, the economy was small,

measuring only about N\$8 billion in nominal terms, and the scope of economic activities was limited. Today, we boast an economy that is valued at N\$145 billion Namibian dollars, an 18-fold increase over 25 years, and with more diverse areas of activity. This is proof that Namibia and Namibians have become wealthier. Statistical evidence suggests that more black people have entered the mainstream of the economy and this is to be celebrated. More work however needs to be done in ensuring a fairer distribution of this growth and concomitant wealth to a wider circle of Namibians.

Our economy remains in our own hands, in the sense that we are not dependent on external sources of finance and their stringent conditions to fund our development programmes. So far, there has been no need to approach international financial institutions to bail us out, and I believe as long as we prudently manage the financial affairs, of our Household, this will not happen as our macroeconomic fundamentals remain strong.

Nevertheless, being a Child of International Solidarity, we have and continue to work with our development partners from all over the world, in the quest to develop our country. In this regard I would like to mention the significant contributions made by our development partners including the People's Republic of China, United States of America, Germany, the World Bank, Japan and others in the form of loans, grants and technical assistance. Programs such as the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) for example, have had a significant impact on our Education, Tourism and Agriculture sectors and have taken us along way down the path of development. And for this we remain very grateful.

Going forward Honorable Speaker, Honorable Chairperson, we must aim to create an economy that is inclusive, sensitive and responsive to national developmental objectives and imperatives. Our duty is to ensure that these complicated technical terms we use translate into measurable improvements in living standards for ordinary Namibians. Although low inflation is important for growth, people need sustainable jobs

that pay them a living wage so that they can feed their families. It is our obligation to distill everything we do into bread and butter issues which affect our brothers and sisters living in rural communities and townships.

We need to move with urgency. We should however be cautioned by Mahatma Gandhi who said, "*one can go very fast but in the wrong direction.*" This, of course, is not what we want for Namibia. Ideally, we would like to go fast, and go fast in the right direction. We can only ensure we go fast, in the right direction if we work together in the spirit of Harambee. Breaking down is easier than building. Let us build our Namibian House together!

Whilst efforts to transform the production structure of the economy and making the economy more competitive will continue to be pursued, we shall also raise the bar regarding transformation of ownership structures. To redress imbalances of the past, we have adopted the model of a pro development state. In other words, the State will play a more active role in the economy. This is not to compete with the private sector but to acknowledge that the 'invisible hand' of the market does not always work as it should. Therefore, restriction of ownership over our natural resources will also be explored and enforced. I will also direct that the Procurement Bill be brought back to Parliament as soon as possible. This Bill should deliberately favor local business especially the previously disadvantaged. Equally, the completion of the Retail Charter should be fast-tracked and finalized before the end of 2015. It is unacceptable that, a quarter century after independence, locally produced goods are denied shelf space in retail outlets.

I call upon our Ministry of Industrialization, Trade and SME Development to ensure that our Industrial Policy and accompanying Growth at Home Strategy get implemented expeditiously. Everything, we do should be aimed at adding value locally and developing the local economy.

Honorable Speaker,
Honorable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

The world is now a global village made out of different communities. The Namibian House exists within that global village. We are a Child of International Solidarity, who has had friends who have stood by us through thick and thin and there are no bigger friends than Angola and Cuba, whose sons and daughters paid the ultimate sacrifice to ensure the construction of the Namibian House.

Building this house has not been easy. It was said by William Pfaff that, "*The achievement of nationhood is a product not only of time and circumstance but usually of war and suffering as well.*" This is why for the suffering that our international friends and African brothers and sisters had to endure, they are always welcome in the Namibian House not as guests but as brothers and sisters. As family.

Namibia is part and parcel of New Africa. Africa's time is now. The New Africa consists of many countries that played a pivotal role in stifling the Apartheid Regime and helped bring its cruel legacy to an end. Never has the spirit of Pan Africanism had a more profound effect than during the fight against colonial rule. Now we want to carry the same spirit into the next phase of the struggle.

As we enter what we refer to as the second phase of the struggle, we are committed to joining our African brothers and sisters all across the continent to promote intra-African trade as well as value addition which we believe will take our continent to the next level and usher in the era of a New Africa.

In the New Africa, we have ensured that the days of Coup d'états have been banished and are incidences of distant memory. There are also no more One Party

States. We as Africans, as the African Union (AU), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) amongst others, have ostracized those who come to office through unlawful ways. In New Africa we respect our former Presidents. They live in Africa and are revered. They are not in exile, jail or six feet under.

With regards to SADC, Namibia is committed to the future of this Regional Economic Community. Last week we visited a giant to the North called Angola where I discussed several issues of bilateral interest. My next visit will be to a giant to the South which is South Africa. Likewise we are committed to increasing political, economic and cultural cooperation with our other neighbours in SADC such as Zambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana as well as non-neighbours being Tanzania, Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In New Africa we should no longer talk about lack of skills but rather sharing of skills. No longer should we talk about lack of business opportunities but rather increased Intra-African Trade. No longer should we talk about brain drain but rather brain gain.

As with all communities, one's house is never safe if other houses in the neighborhood are burning. We, therefore, appeal to all our African counterparts to ensure peace, stability and the rule of law. Furthermore, as those who have experienced the difficulty of oppression, we reiterate our solidarity with the people of Western Sahara and Palestine and urge the International Community to ensure that the people of these countries attain freedom from oppression and aggression.

Honorable Speaker,
Honorable Chairperson,
My Fellow Compatriots,

Nobody in this house must be left out. Let us remain committed to this house. Let us remain committed to the spirit of One Namibian Nation. Let us remain united.

As Kwame Nkrumah said, "The forces that unite us are intrinsic and greater than the superimposed influences that keep us apart."

The key to our victory in the war against poverty is unity, pride in our country and our house. Let us exude the spirit of the New Namibia, a spirit of peace, integrity, sacrifice, strength, passion, patriotism, love, togetherness and bravery. These are the characteristics that helped us win the struggle for our independence and they will surely help us win the second phase of the struggle.

I am therefore calling upon all of us, to hold hands to ensure that our House does not disintegrate. As I have said before, there will be problems from time to time, but every time this happens, we should have the resilience to overcome and emerge stronger as a united Nation. We should embrace diversity and steer away from tribalism and other isms that can only detract us from achieving our common mission of developing our country.

We must pull together in the same direction. We are all sons and daughters of this soil. This land and the precious blood shed for it is what makes us Namibian, not the color of our skin or the languages we speak. When born in Namibia you are a Namibian. If one of your parents is Namibian you are Namibian. This is your birthright that nobody can take away from you. We must stop trying to make people feel guilty for things that are not in their control. No one should be made to feel guilty or inadequate because he/she is white or black, old or young, from a minority group or a majority group or living with a disability. Let us respect our women and children. Women are the bearers of life. They are an integral component of humanity and its future and to violate the rights of women is to violate this whole nation's conscience. We all came into being through a woman so let us in our collective Namibian voice say - no - to Gender Based Violence. Namibia is big enough for all of us and no one should feel as if they don't belong here.

Fellow Namibians, the future is bright, Namibia is on the march and on the move. We are fortunate to be here at a pivotal point in our nation's history where we are in charge, where we can determine the path we want to take. Shakespeare once said that, "*It is not in the stars to hold our destiny but in ourselves.*" We have the power to pursue a path towards equitable wealth distribution. We have the power to pursue the path towards peace, development and prosperity. We have the power to determine our own destinies, as Africans as Namibians, standing together as One Namibia, One Nation.

It is now my honour to declare the first session of the sixth parliament officially open.

Thank you and God Bless Africa. God bless Namibia. God Bless all of you!