



Media Release

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For immediate release

RE: International Day of Parliamentarism 30 June

The 30th June was declared as the International Day of Parliamentarism in 2018 by the United Nations General Assembly by Resolution 72/278 as it coincides with the day in 1889, close to 131 years ago, that the IPU (the global organization of parliaments) was founded.

This year, the day is observed under the theme 'Parliaments in a time of pandemic'. This demonstrates the difficult times the world is facing and it encourages parliaments to continue playing their oversight roles amidst the challenges of Covid-19.

The 7th Parliament of the Republic of Namibia assumed office on the 20th March 2020 a few days after the declaration of State of Emergency by H.E. President Dr. Hage Geingob, and six days before the country went into lockdown due to the presence of covid-19 in the country.

This presented serious challenges to the Members of Parliament (MPs) in executing their constitutional duties. Nonetheless, with the relaxation of emergency regulations associated with COVID-19, the National Assembly resumed its session on 26 May 2020 with several adjustments which include measures such as social distancing, hand sanitisation, temperature screening and the adaptation of videoconferencing into the parliamentary debates.

"Actually, we were able to conduct the first 'virtual' session of parliament where MPs could participate in the debates from two separate conference rooms linked to the chamber. This has enabled the House to successfully pass the 2020/21 Appropriation Bill, and debating thereof," says Prof Peter Katjavivi, Speaker of the National Assembly. He added that Parliament succeeded in its efforts to stream live its sessions through social media (Facebook) which has allowed the public to follow debates live in real time.

According to the United Nations (UN) in COVID-19 times, Parliaments and other government institutions are subject to the same social distancing measures as other public and private organizations. Yet, in a times of crisis, the role of parliament is more vital than ever to pass emergency laws, allocate resources and scrutinize government action. Some parliaments are modifying laws and procedures to allow for remote working, while some have continued meeting physically and others have recessed altogether.

This Day celebrates parliaments and the ways in which parliamentary systems of government improve the day-to-day lives of people all over the world. It is also an opportunity for parliaments to take stock, identify challenges and ways to address them effectively.

To access Bills and other Parliament related information, log-in on www.parliament.na, you may also follow events and activities of Parliament on Facebook, @ Parliament of the Republic of Namibia.

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