



Republic of Namibia

Summarised Independence Day Address of
H. E. President Hifikepunye Pohamba

BY

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DURING THE

18TH INDEPENDENCE DAY COMMEMORATION

RUNDU, URBAN
5TH April 2008

Director of Ceremonies
Honourable N. Muremi, Rundu Urban Constituency
Esteemed Traditional Leaders
Ladies and Gentlemen
Comrades and Friends
Fellow Namibians

At the very outset, I would like to kindly request you rise, so that we can all observe a minute of silence in honour of the late Hon. Reinhardt “Kala” Gertze Comrade John Alfons Pandeni, Nico Bessinger, and Julia Nepembe, 2 sons and a daughter of our beloved country who have passed away leaving legacies worthy of our admiration and praise. (I thank you, you may be seated).

Today, we celebrate the 18th Anniversary of the attainment of our nationhood. As we gather here today, we recall the heartening events of that historic day, when we hoisted our flag of freedom and sovereignty for the first time. We recall how we celebrated the lowering of the apartheid flag of oppression, in the knowledge that it would never again fly as a symbol of authority over our country. The events of that historic day are still vivid in our memories.

We can look back with pride at the many successes that were achieved after independence in many areas of social and economic development. We are proud, and rightly so, of the peace and stability that our country has enjoyed since that joyful day of 21 March 1990.

Freedom and independence has in many ways unleashed the potential of our people who have taken advantage of their liberty to make tangible contributions to the development of our country.

Many of those who were denied opportunities by apartheid tyranny are today contributing meaningfully in shaping a brighter future for the Land of the Brave.

Our hopes for a better future are reinforced when we look at the flourishing youth, a new generation of the “born-frees”, Namibians who were born into a society free from war, victimisation, intimidation, racial discrimination and oppression. These blossoming youth represent a new generation, the torch-bearers of our democratic traditions and our country’s future. As we sing that our democracy is maturing, the “born-frees” will, as from this year for the first time be able to exercise their democratic right of participating in elections at different levels.

The peace and political stability that our country has enjoyed over the years is one of the major achievements of our country and fitting tribute to the fallen heroes and heroines of our revolution whose blood waters our freedom.

In this climate of stability and peace, we have been able to implement policies and programmes aimed at improving the living conditions of our people. In the face of numerous challenges and backlogs, progress has been made in many areas of social and economic development of expanded service delivery and access to public amenities.

Access to education has been expanded in all parts of the country. Literacy and numeracy levels have increased. More Namibians have access to health care as the number of clinics, hospitals and health centres have grown. Housing projects have been implemented in our

urban centres as well as rural settlements. The national electricity grid has been extended to cater for the growth of our towns and cities.

Rural electrification has changed the face of many rural communities across Namibia.

Moreover, physical and communication infrastructures have reached the remote parts of the country. New roads have been built to facilitate economic activities, and trade as well, to ensure safer movement of people and goods. Our railway network has been expanded by more than 300 kilometres. The rehabilitation of roads and railways has enjoyed ongoing attention of our SWAPO-Party led Government.

Telephone connectivity has grown with both fixed lines and cellular communications. Increasing numbers of Namibians are joining the digital age through the use of the internet and related technologies. I can, therefore, proudly say that, despite the challenges, Namibians have many reasons to be proud on this occasion of this 18th Anniversary of our country's freedom and independence.

This year, our Independence Anniversary celebration is coinciding with the inauguration of the new State House, a symbol of our nationhood and sovereignty. The President thanked His Excellency Comrade Dr. Sam Nujoma, Father of the Nation, for his vision and conceptualisation of this project. This project was initiated during his tenure of office as President of the Republic of Namibia.

His devotion to nation-building and infrastructure development is admired by all patriotic Namibians. It serves as an inspiration to all peace-loving and patriotic citizens of our Republic.

President Pohamba assured that the present leadership of our SWAPO-Party Government will continue to build on the strong foundation that has already been laid under his leadership.

We will work tirelessly for the economic and social well-being of all Namibians. To many Namibians, Cde. Dr. Nujoma will go down in the history of our country as one of the great sons of Namibia who contributed immensely to the liberation of our Motherland. For this, we say, once again, thank you very much for what he has done for the Namibian people. May God continue to bless him.

I wish to stress that as a Government, we are fully aware of what our priorities are. It is for this reason that this project was started many years after Cabinet declared the top four priorities of our Government, namely, education, health, agriculture and housing. This is borne out by the forward-looking policies and budgetary allocations we have consistently made to these priority areas in order to improve service delivery and expand access so that all Namibians can enjoy the fruits of our independence.

We will continue to implement projects and programmes to facilitate economic growth and improve the living conditions of our people. This year, the construction of the Rundu-Elundu Road, via Nkurenkuru will start. This will lead to the construction of a tarred road of more than 300 kilometres. This road will enable safer movement of people and goods from Kavango Region to Ohangwena and beyond. It will promote trade and commerce, thereby enabling our people who engage in income generating projects to reach markets.

Director of Ceremonies,

As we celebrate this joyful occasion of our 18th Independence Anniversary, our thoughts are with the thousands of our compatriots who have been displaced by the floods in the north and northeast of our country.

The impact of the flood is devastating for our country, especially in terms of the destruction of infrastructures such as houses, schools, clinics, businesses and roads. A few weeks ago, His Excellency the President declared the flood situation in our country a national disaster. We are going to work tirelessly to ameliorate the impact of the floods.

Fellow Namibians,

His Excellency the President called upon all Namibian citizens to continue to maintain and promote peace, security and stability. We should cherish and continue to promote the policy of National Reconciliation. We should continue to promote national unity and shun the vices of tribalism, regionalism, ethnicity, racial discrimination, sexism and corruption. We should continue to pay tribute to our fallen heroes and heroines whose blood waters our freedom. Let us keep Namibia a winning nation among the community of nations.

Director of Ceremonies,

Cde. President is aware of the flourishing democracy of our country; we are witnessing the budding of different political parties. And while this is evidence that we as Namibians are exercising our political freedoms,

let us never forget that there was only one party that brought about the peace, democracy and development that we are enjoying today. That Party is the mighty SWAPO Party. No other party can be associated with the heroism that characterised our national struggle and victorious liberation, marked by the Independence we are celebrating here today.

Therefore, it is most unfortunate to hear of some SWAPO Party members whose allegiance is wavering or shifting, and who are leaving our mighty Party; the Party that liberated this country. I wish to make a sincere appeal to those members to call on the proven track-record of SWAPO Party and to stay strong; remain resolute in your allegiance to SWAPO Party. Comrades, let us not allow negative sentiments and conflict to reign within this constituency. Let us, rather, strengthen our Party from within and by, and by bringing new dynamic members on board.

The time is now to unite and forge ahead with the sustainable and systematic development of the country we fought for and whose liberation is watered with the blood of our fallen and brave countrymen and women. This development, however, is impossible without peace and is dependent upon education. Therefore, I wish to call on all parents. I encourage you to join partners with our teachers in educating, mentoring and guiding our children. In particular, take initiative to encourage our children to take their education seriously, and to consider pursuing studies in maths and science. These natural sciences are the foundation upon which careers in development such as medicine, nursing, teaching and engineering, are built, and through which we can achieve the goals enshrined in our Vision2030.

Our nation is now 18 years old, and can be considered to be maturing. It is time to ensure that Namibians are educated and empowered to take charge of our own programmes. While we are grateful for the support, yet we remain heavily dependent on expatriates in this regard. Take for example the hospitals at Nyangana, Andara and Nankudu here in the Kavango Region; all of these hospitals are manned by expatriates only.

I pose a challenge to the Namibian nation and to the youth in particular. Pursue and master your education so that you can soon assume your rightful place as leaders, managers and experts within all sectors and industries.

Comrades and Friends,

On this 18th Anniversary of our victorious struggle, this commemoration of Namibia's hard-won Independence, I salute the heroes and heroines who have passed on. In honour of their memories, I challenge us to now follow in their valiant footsteps and work hard for the development of our country, to ensure that peace is safeguarded and its unity is maintained.

One Namibia! One Nation!

Long Live the Republic of Namibia!!