

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**ADDRESS TO THE NATION BY
HIS EXCELLENCY HIFIKEPUNYE
POHAMBAMBA, PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA, ON THE OCCASION
OF THE CELEBRATION OF THE
21st INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY**

21 MARCH 2011

**OTJIWARONGO,
OTJOZONDJUPA REGION**

**Check Against Delivery*

Director of Ceremonies,
Right Honourable Prime Minister,
Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly,
Honourable Chairperson of the National Council,
Your Honour, the Chief Justice,
Honourable Ministers,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Honourable Governor of Otjozondjupa Region,
Honourable Governors,
Honourable Regional and Local Authority Councillors,
Esteemed Traditional and Community Leaders,
Your Worship, the Mayor of Otjiwarongo,
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Distinguished Invited Guests,
Fellow Namibians,

I wish to start by congratulating the Namibian people on this historic occasion of the commemoration of our nation's 21st Independence Anniversary. On this day, twenty-one years ago, we hoisted the flag of nationhood, freedom and sovereignty, signaling the end of many decades of apartheid colonialism and the beginning of a new era of freedom and democracy. On that day, we started in earnest with the task of nation building, reconstruction and National Reconciliation.

The road to freedom and independence has been long, and the challenges have been many. However, the unwavering determination of the Namibian people, acting in unity of purpose, has enabled our nation to make commendable progress in many areas of social and economic development.

To begin with, we have succeeded in building a strong constitutional foundation for democratic governance. We have established the necessary institutions and legal framework that serve as the bedrock for the rule of law as well as transparent and accountable governance.

The constitutional doctrine of the separation of powers has been strictly adhered to and observed for the past 21 years. This has made Namibia one of the beacons of constitutional and democratic governance on our Continent. It has also enabled our nation to maintain peace and stability, while making head-way in advancing and improving the economic welfare and the living conditions of our people.

The post-independence Governments led by the SWAPO Party have implemented forward-looking policies aimed at removing the vestiges of apartheid from the sectors of education and health and indeed from the entire fabric of our society.

Today, all Namibians enjoy freedom of movement, freedom of association and many other constitutionally guaranteed fundamental human rights and freedoms that they were denied for many decades. Therefore, as we look back at the past 21 years, we proudly recall the historic and watershed moment of 21 March 1990, when Namibia took her place among the free nations of the world.

Today, we pay tribute to our forebearers who fought the forces of colonialism with courage, determination and gallantry. An occasion such as this one would be incomplete, if we do not remember and honour our forefathers and mothers for their selfless sacrifices during their resistance against foreign occupation, colonialism and oppression. They are the architects of the freedom and independence that we are enjoying today.

Therefore, let us pay homage to Hendrik Witbooi, Samuel Maherero, Nehale Iya Mpingana, Mandume ya Ndemufayo, Ipumbu Ya Shilongo, Kakurukaze Mungunda and many other gallant heroes and heroines who paved the way towards our nationhood. Let us honour their memories by recommitting ourselves to building a better society where our people are free from the indignity of poverty, hunger, homelessness, and under development.

For us as Namibians, this gives us many reasons to be joyful and to express our eternal gratitude to the heroes and heroines who sacrificed their lives and shed their precious blood for the freedom and independence of our nation. Similarly, we renew our gratitude to the progressive nations, organizations and individuals around the world who supported our struggle for nationhood.

We appreciate the support and solidarity we received from friendly countries in Africa and around the world, particularly the Frontline States during the difficult days of our national liberation struggle.

Their consistent support contributed immensely towards the achievement of our ultimate goals and the historic mission of establishing a constitutional democracy in Namibia, where all people are equal before the law, without discrimination on the basis of race, colour or creed.

Fellow Namibians,

On 21 March 1990, we took the destiny of our nation into our own hands and reinforced the process of crafting a new direction for our country to accelerate socio-economic development, to improve and expand the delivery of public services and to build new infrastructure such as roads, railways, airports, powerlines, water pipelines, housing units and other public facilities. We seized the opportunity to harness Government resources and machinery to address the question of inequity in the provision of many public services including education, health care, social grants, and other services.

This task of nation building has been, and continues to be tremendously difficult. However, I can confidently say that we are making steady gains towards the achievement of our goals and objectives. We have moved forward and the momentum can only become stronger. We should continue to develop our nation and make Namibia a better place for all, by designing and implementing innovative policies that can effectively tackle the problems of unemployment, capacity building and improve the skill levels of our youth to participate meaningfully in economic activities.

In this context, our Government will forge ahead with the implementation of National Development Plans and Vision 2030. We will continue to improve service delivery by capacitating Regional Councils and Local Authorities to serve communities better and thereby improve the living conditions of our people. Specific attention will be given to the communities in rural and peri-urban areas.

As we speak, our SWAPO Party Government is hard at work to accelerate the establishment of more agricultural projects under the auspices of the Green Scheme in order to increase local food production and to ensure food security at both household and national levels. We have recommitted ourselves to continue improving service delivery in the areas of health care, education, housing, provision of potable water and electricity. We will continue to combat tuberculosis and malaria and to build more clinics in rural areas.

We will continue to stamp out the evils of corruption, greed and combat crime so that our country can continue to enjoy peace and prosperity. Those who commit corrupt and criminal acts are enemies of the nation. They must be dealt with in terms of the relevant laws.

That is the only way we can create an ethical society and secure a better future for our country. The message should be clear that no one should be allowed to violate the laws of the land and get away with it. Wherever and whenever crime is committed, the laws of the land must be fully enforced, without fear or favour.

Laws have been enacted to regulate and ensure proper conduct of citizens. As such, all our laws should be respected and complied with at all times. The question facing our society is: How can we talk about freedom and independence for those hundreds of women, children, senior citizens and many others who have been brutalized by criminals? The actions of criminals negate the noble ideals that Namibians fought and died for. They are incompatible with a free and democratic society that we have committed ourselves to build. Therefore, crime must be stamped out forcefully. It is a duty for all Namibians to ensure that this goal is achieved. None of us has the luxury to stand and observe, while our fellow citizens are victimized by criminal elements.

On this day, we should all recommit ourselves to support our law enforcement agencies to effectively combat crime and to create safer communities where Namibian children can play and where all our people, especially women, can pursue their lives without fear of being attacked, violated or robbed. All Namibians must join hands to fight and defeat crime. That is the appropriate way to honour the sacrifices of our heroes and heroines, whose *blood waters our freedom*.

Dear Compatriots,

At the age of 21, Namibia's democracy has indeed come of age. Those who were born after independence, whom we commonly refer to as the Born Frees, can now not only vote in elections but can also qualify to hold public Office excluding that of the President. In other words, they qualify to become Member of Parliament, Cabinet and the Judiciary. Although the period of 21 years is very short in the history of nations, our country has received international recognition in many areas of public administration and for the constitutional protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms. Recently, Namibia was ranked Number 1 on the African continent in terms of media freedom. We are also ranked among the top three as a favourable destination for tourism. These accolades, coming as they do, during the year in which we celebrate our nation's 21st Independence Anniversary, are indeed a welcome and fitting birthday present for Namibia.

The onus is upon us to do more and to make our nation's star shine brighter, not only today but also in the future.

We are also aware that we are still faced with many challenges. The unemployment situation especially among the youth and women is unacceptable. The level of poverty leaves much to be desired. The HIV/AIDS pandemic still needs undivided attention, the rate of rural development requires our continued address. The situation of sanitation and decent housing in our informal settlements is a source of great concern to our SWAPO Party Government. These conditions are a wakeup call to our Government. They show that more still needs to be done.

Against this background, our SWAPO Party Government will continue to address the plight of our youth and women by putting more resources in education and employment creation economic sectors. We will continue to address the welfare of our senior citizens, orphans and vulnerable children, peasants, veterans of the liberation struggle and workers. We will continue to improve the health sector in order to render quality health care to our nation, especially to our citizens who are affected by HIV/AIDS. We will continue to improve our education sector in order to ensure quality, skills development and a high pass rate, especially for Grade 10 and 12 learners.

I wish to use this opportunity to urge the youth of Namibia to do their part and to contribute positively to the process of nation building. They can do this by staying away from the social evils of alcohol and drug abuse. They can do this by dedicating themselves fully to their work and to their education. The passing rates in our schools will surely improve if all learners take their education seriously at all times. This is my challenge to them. On its part, our Government will continue to strengthen the education sector at all levels.

I urge our nation's parents to do their part in order to build stronger communities. They can do this by carrying out all their parental duties with dedication. Our children must be brought up with strong values of honesty, respect, integrity and hard work. This will help us to make Namibia a winning nation. I urge our traditional and community leaders to do their part and contribute positively to the moulding of a better Namibia. They can do this by spreading the message of tolerance and mutual accommodation. They can do this by emphasizing the strength of our diversity and the richness of our various traditions and cultures. This is the backbone of our Policy of National Reconciliation.

I urge religious and spiritual leaders to provide a steady moral compass to our nation. They can do this by working within our communities and inculcating strong moral values in both adults and the youth. A nation with a strong moral anchor will be able to reverse the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, reduce and eradicate crime, and be at peace with itself and its neighbours.

I urge Namibian politicians to contribute constructively to the strengthening of our systems of public governance. They can do this by engaging positively in public debates on issues that affect our nation. The onus is on them to foster mutual understanding and to place the national interest before and above anything else. In this manner, we can help to make Namibia a beacon of democracy and an oasis of peace, freedom and progress.

Fellow Namibians,

As we celebrate this historic occasion, I wish to emphasize that, with proper planning, hard work and dedication, we can build a better future for our country. We can overcome the present challenges of unemployment, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, poverty and under-development.

With proper planning, hard work and dedication, we can bring about the needed improvements in the living conditions of our people, especially to those in rural and peri-urban areas.

With proper planning, hard work and dedication, we can make Namibia a shining star among the nations of the world. I strongly believe that the future of our nation is bright. Therefore, I invite the nation to join me and look towards the future with optimism in the belief that the best days of our nation are ahead of us. Let us move forward together in the spirit of “*One Namibia, One Nation*”.

I wish the entire nation a happy, joyous and peaceful 21st Independence Anniversary.

I thank you.