

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



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

WINDHOEK

April 15, 2021

Checked against delivery

- Honourable Professor Peter Katjavivi, Speaker of the National Assembly;
- Hon. Lukas Sinimbo Muha, Chairperson of the National Council;
- Right Honourable Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, Prime Minister and Leader of Government Business in Parliament;
- Honourable McHenry Venaani, Leader of the Official Opposition;
- Honourable Members of Parliament;

Special Guests:

- Comrade Nangolo Mbumba, Vice President of the Republic of Namibia;
- Madame Monica Geingos, First Lady of the Republic of Namibia;
- Members of the Media;
- Fellow Namibians,

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

I stand before you, as a guest in this Chamber, in accordance with Article 32 (2) of the Namibian Constitution, to fulfil my obligation to address the Nation on the implementation of Government programmes for the period 2020/21 and chart the way forward towards a future we continue to shape together.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

Where there is no peace there can be no development and where there is no development, there can be no peace. Effective governance, responsive institutions and an engaged citizenry are the bedrock of any democracy and a critical component to secure peace, socio-economic development and social cohesion. Despite the gains that have been made to strengthen Namibia's Governance Architecture, I remain conscious of the need to do more. Thus I reaffirm once more Government's commitment to strengthening processes, systems and institutions to deliver quality services, protect freedoms and effectively combat corruption, to improve livelihoods for all Namibians.

Namibia's Governance Architecture is grounded on a constitutional democracy comprising of a multiparty electoral system, regular elections every five years, two Presidential term limits of five years each, three organs of State with clear separation of powers, a three-tier representative Government comprising of national, regional and local government and constitutionally entrenched media freedoms. I stand here, on the basis of a fixed term contract given to me by the People, the ultimate Sovereigns. The Government is bound to the social contract renewed through the 2019 Presidential and National Assembly Elections, and the 2020 Regional and Local Authority elections. Elections are the ultimate expression of our democracy. As democrats, we accepted the outcomes of the concluded elections and I reassure all elected leaders, of my commitment to collaborate. Let us build the Namibian House, together.

Upon assuming Office on 21 March 2020, I renewed the war against poverty, inequalities and corruption, which continue to undermine our noble developmental intentions. It should be noted however that redressing a century of systemic exclusion and injustice, which left majorities of our population trapped in generational poverty, will require broad-based corrective measures, beyond reconciliation. This question of redress has been a central theme and focus of the Government.

I can assure you that we will stay the course during my Term of Office, working towards the ideal of a truly inclusive, united and prosperous Namibian House. There is no alternative to shared prosperity and there can be no compromise to this principle. I often repeat what Prof. Stieglitz said, "The only growth that is sustainable, is shared growth. Prosperity that is not shared, will not be sustainable." In that vein, the fiscal and policy focus of the Government is geared towards wealth redistribution in order to secure a sustainable future for each and every Namibian.

Corruption is dishonesty and robs the country of resources intended for development. Given the importance of this issue, and considering the expectations expressed in the media this week, I will reserve this very important topic to the interactive discussion, at the end of my statement.

Transparency plus accountability equals trust (T+A=Tr). In order to improve levels of trust between citizens, the Government and institutions, our stance on transparency has been strengthened through the Open-Door Media policy of the Presidency. This is one of the reasons why Namibia is ranked 1st in Africa and 23rd globally on the Press Freedom Index and 7th on the continent for Governance, as measured by Mo Ibrahim Governance Index.

We are pleased to host the World Press Freedom Day on 03 May 2021, coinciding with the 30th Anniversary of the Windhoek

Declaration for the Development of a Free, Independent and Pluralistic Press, that will be celebrated in conjunction with World Press Freedom Day from the 1st to the 3rd of May 2021 here in Windhoek. As the country with the freest press on the continent, Namibia is ready to welcome the international community as we commemorate the landmark Windhoek Declaration.

The Harambee Prosperity Plan II, launched on 18 March 2021 and which contains key components for economic recovery, is a product of countrywide consultations with diverse constituencies of our country. The Plan builds on the foundation of HPPI and has been informed by the 5th National Development Plan; recommendations from the High-Level Panel on the Namibian Economy; the African Union Agenda 2063; the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and importantly, contributions by citizens from the length and breadth of our country during the 2019 Town Hall Meetings. Through these participatory Town Halls, which lasted on average 6 hours per meeting, Cabinet Ministers and I, listened to the inputs of citizens and provided feedback directly.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT

A year has passed since the outbreak of COVID-19 in Namibia, on 13 March 2020. The year 2020 will go down as a very difficult year, as the Government took the challenging but prompt decision to restrict socio-economic activities, in an effort to slow the transmission of COVID-19, while bolstering public health capacity.

Consequent to these necessary, but disruptive restrictions, of which some remain in force, the prevailing macroeconomic environment is characterized by anemic growth and limited

fiscal space, to respond in a counter-cyclical manner to the hardships being experienced across the country.

To mitigate the consequences of COVID-19, we deployed a stimulus package of 8.1 billion Namibian Dollars and supplemented that amount with an additional 500 million Namibian Dollar intervention, specifically targeted towards Small and Medium Enterprises.

These efforts illustrate the responsive intent of Government in partnership with the private sector, and reinforces my belief that when we hold hands as a nation, we stand a greater chance of success.

Any economic recovery needs to be preceded by the establishment of a firm foundation against which we can launch an ambitious recovery effort. The Harambee Prosperity Plan II provides the basis for a comprehensive programme of initiatives through which an economic recovery can be executed.

Through focused implementation of this Plan, the objective is to spread the benefits of the recovery to a wider segment of the population.

The Government will lead the economic recovery by pursuing three key goals. First, through updating the national fixed asset register, the completion of the State-Owned Enterprises reform process and the implementation and seeding of a Sovereign Wealth Fund, to better steward our natural and public resources.

After identifying these assets, the second goal of the Economic Advancement Pillar requires us to improve the productive yield of identified assets, including Green Schemes and the Neckartal Dam, which look to enhance the productive yield of our agricultural assets.

A well-defined partnership between the public and private sector is essential to fully unleash our country's potential. The Public-Private-Partnership framework of 2017 will

be a key instrument to preparing projects in excess of 27 billion Namibian Dollars over the period, with ambition to create more than 42, 000 jobs.

With the sectors of agriculture, tourism and construction hard hit by the preceding drought and the COVID-19 pandemic, we must pursue opportunities to foster new engines of growth. The world is determined to recover from this economic crisis with a renewed focus on building back, better on a safer planet. Namibia is uniquely endowed to attract significant investment in the green and blue economy, naturally driven by our marine and renewable energy resources.

Namibia and in particular the town of Luderitz, is strategically positioned to competitively produce the clean energy and fuels required by global investors. HPPII will therefore explore the production of green hydrogen and ammonia as a strategic bet. To date Namibia has received 6 written offers from prospective developers to locally manufacture these clean fuels. The interest originates from as far afield as Australia, Belgium and the Netherlands but also from local companies. I am pleased to share that the possible capital expected to be deployed into these projects ranges from 32 billion to 150 billion Namibian dollars with the possible number of jobs to be created through the development and operational cycles exceeding 20,000. This is an opportunity that we should all grab with both hands and explore to its full potential.

To expedite these opportunities, I will constitute the Green Hydrogen Council, which will report, on a regular basis, progress made towards our goal of reaching a final investment decision within my Presidency.

To strengthen institutional capacity to realize economic recovery, the Namibian Investment Promotion & Development Board has been established in the Presidency, with a focused mandate to court and retain local and international investors. This Agency has been hard at work since January 2021 and has already compiled a portfolio of more than 100 investment projects. The top 15 projects with combined value in excess of 45 billion

Namibian Dollars were presented last week to a joint sitting of the Cabinet Committee on Treasury, and Trade & Economic Development. The Board is mandated to attract more than 50 billion Namibian Dollars in investments in the next five years.

One example of such an investment opportunity is the Kelp Blue project which aspires to cultivate a 70,000-hectare forest of underwater seaweed, off the coast of Luderitz and export the product into the international markets. The project is ranked by the World Economic Forum as one of their top 11 innovations protecting life below and above the oceans, complementing the Government's ambition to champion the blue economy and underscoring our membership of the High-Level Panel on Ocean Sustainability. The project has the potential to attract 5 billion Namibian Dollars in investment and create 400 jobs.

Secondly, in recognition of the importance of focused revenue collection, I presided over the launch of the Namibia Revenue Authority on 07 April 2021, with a stronger mandate to broaden our tax base.

Finally, one of the key lessons from HPPI was the need to strengthen implementation, monitoring & evaluation. Going forward, to ensure projects contained in HPPII are well tracked, efficiently costed, implemented and timeously reported on, a Performance Delivery Unit has been established, augmenting the public sector capacity.

Our economic recovery programme is grounded in job creation as paramount to inclusive growth. To protect jobs, I will establish a Business Rescue Task Force, with a mandate to review our insolvency legislation and infuse the concept of business rescue into the legal frameworks, with a view to mitigate the number of firms that face liquidation during these trying times. This Task Force will be commissioned during May 2021 and must complete its mandate by end October 2021.

To further strengthen employment creation, work has commenced to consolidate the plethora of funding instruments currently under the SME Financing Strategy at the

Development Bank of Namibia, into a National MSME Fund that will deliver blended financing to entrepreneurial start-ups and SMEs.

The 4th Industrial Revolution has ushered in new and disruptive technologies which present an opportunity to unlock efficiencies and development. In coming weeks, a 4th Industrial Revolution Task Force, comprising of figures drawn from academia, labour, industry and technologies, to conduct a 4IR country assessment and ascertain the readiness of Namibia's labour force and related infrastructures to exploit and harness the full potential presented by these technologies and the Future of Work.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The past 13 months have not been easy. Life and work have been upended and thrown into a state of flux, with many families plunged into financial vulnerability and distress, and many more left at a loss, grieving the sudden departure of loved ones.

As a Government, we have remained transparent with our plans from the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The measures put in place and our appeal to Namibians to adhere to these Regulations were done in the interest of all Namibians. I am pleased to report that most Namibians have adjusted their behaviour accordingly and have reacted in a mature manner by respecting the Rule of Law during this period.

To this end, our collective actions to reduce the threat of COVID-19 have staved off a health crisis in our country, enabling us to avoid a Third Wave as we have witnessed in other parts of the world. Regrettably, our nation has lost 592 Namibian lives due to COVID-related complications.

As at today, the cumulative number of Namibians who have tested positive for COVID-19 since the index case stands at Forty-Six-Thousand-and-Fifty-One (46,051). Of these, Forty-Four-Thousand-One-Hundred-and-Sixty-Two (44,162) have recovered, while 1,286 are still fighting off active infection. Let me take this opportunity to wish all who are suffering ill-health, a speedy recovery.

Namibia is a signatory to the COVAX facility and we expect an initial consignment of 24,000 doses of the AstraZeneca Vaccine to reach our country during the month of April 2021. During Phase 1 of vaccination which started on 19 March 2021 in the Khomas and Erongo regions – Three Thousand Two Hundred and Eighty Two (3,282) cumulative vaccine doses have thus far been administered.

In the wake of this pandemic, countries in the developed world have concentrated their efforts on safeguarding the health of their own citizens, with Africa, left as a mere afterthought. However, in the true spirit of South-South cooperation, China and India have come to Africa and Namibia's aid at this hour of need through donations of 100,000 and 30,000 doses of the SINOPHARM and COVISHIELD vaccines, respectively. These countries continue to embody their friendship with the African people through genuine actions.

I appeal to all Namibians to make use of the vaccines. There is no coercion, there is no force, it is voluntary. But for your own good, I urge you to get vaccinated.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

I assure you of our Government's unyielding commitment to safeguarding both Namibian lives and livelihoods. That is why we have allocated resources to strengthen the public health sector in the 2021/22 National Budget.

An allocation of 8,08 billion Namibian Dollars has been made to the Ministry of Health and Social Services. Of this amount, 484 million Namibian Dollars will go towards the procurement of vaccines.

I am concerned about the increasing rates of infections since December 2020 amongst learners at 40 percent; 6 percent amongst Teachers and 4 percent amongst Healthcare Workers. In this regard, the Ministers of Health and Education will continue working together, involving the communities, to seek solutions to effectively safeguard the health and ensure the provision of education for the Namibian Child.

According to *Our World Data*, Namibia remains third in Africa, after South Africa and Morocco respectively, for testing coverage, with a testing ratio of 135 people tested per 1,000 population.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

SOCIAL PROGRESSION

The effects of the pandemic have aggravated our social deficits and threaten to reverse the tremendous gains made over the past 5 years.

We have not lost sight of the reality of countless Namibians who have lost their incomes and who are struggling on a daily basis to put a meal on the table. The interventions of the Harambee Prosperity Plan I, including the increase in the Old Age Social Grant by 100

percent between 2016-2017; the rolling-out of Food Banks and the drought relief programme to all 14 regions, helped to avert starvation for many Namibian families at risk. Through an internationally lauded and comprehensive social safety net framework, the Government sustains on average one million Namibians, annually. Moreover, indicators in governance, poverty and inequality and infrastructure development, demonstrate that Namibia has progressively improved the quality of life for citizens.

In the 2020/21 Financial Year, the Government spent 6 billion Namibian Dollars on social grants which include the Old Age Social Grant (N\$3 billion), Food Bank (N\$70 million), Disability (N\$546 million), Veterans (N\$766 million), Marginalized (N\$45 million), Funeral Benefit (N\$45 million), Orphans & Vulnerable Children (N\$1,05 billion) and the School Feeding Programme (N\$73 million), among others.

Through the AgriBank, Government extended loans to 746 farmers to the value of 200 million Namibian Dollars, creating or maintaining 7,800 jobs in the agricultural sector for the period under review. The newly launched loan scheme for women and youth will further promote financial inclusion, economic empowerment and employment creation opportunities for our young people. To date, 116 beneficiaries have obtained non-collateralised loans totalling 15.6 million Namibian Dollars from the AgriBank.

The outbreak of African Migratory Red Locusts in February 2020 in Zambezi region and subsequently in Kavango East and West, Oshikoto and Otjozondjupa regions, could threaten the expected bumper harvest for this year. The Government has deployed spraying teams, vehicles and an aircraft for the aerial spraying to contain the outbreak. In the same vein, outbreaks of Foot and Mouth Disease were confirmed in the Northern Communal Areas (NCA) in September 2020 and have subsequently spread north of the Cordon Fence, into the Oshikoto region. To contain and control the outbreak, cattle in the Northern Communal Areas are vaccinated in order to build herd immunity. These efforts are ongoing.

Going forward, key interventions under HPPII to secure households from hunger poverty will include:

- Strengthening rural agricultural extension services for communal subsistence farmers in crop producing regions, through the National Agricultural Mechanization and Seed Improvement Programme (NAMSIP);
- Implementation of the local procurement directive to enhance offtakes by the Agro Marketing and Trade Agency (AMTA) which was created to facilitate market access for small-scale farmers.

I would like to pause here to recall the decision of the Cabinet, to the Ministers of Health & Social Services; Education, Arts & Culture; Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety & Security, and Defense & Veterans Affairs, to see to the preferential procurement of local horticultural produce and by so doing, establish markets for our small-scale farmers.

- The School Feeding Programme which currently provides one daily meal to more than 431,500 school going children will be extended in coverage to Secondary Schools and Early Childhood Development Centres, so as to secure a daily nutritional meal for the Namibian Child. Improving nutritional content and education for malnourished children and lactating mothers is a long-term investment in human capital.

Social grants are intended to support those who are vulnerable or unemployed. The principle of a Universal Basic Income Grant in the context of an unequal society like Namibia, where according to the Namibia Statistics Agency, the income of the top 1 percent of Namibians, is equal to the combined income of the bottom 50 percentile – would be entirely misplaced. Therefore, the Food Bank and Marginalised Grant and the Feeding Scheme will be consolidated into a Modified Basic Income Grant, with clear eligibility criteria to determine qualifying beneficiaries.

The situation in Informal settlements is a humanitarian crisis. While delivering urban land, housing and sanitation solutions are critical to social mobility and dignified life, providing adequate shelter remains one of the most daunting challenges. Approximately 230,000 households live in shacks countrywide, while the ongoing rural-urban migration adds to this number daily. In light of these social deficits, the delivery of urban land and housing is an urgent undertaking. Our efforts will be intensified through innovative partnerships with the Private Sector.

We commit to delivering 20,000 housing opportunities and 24,000 serviced erven across the country, the HPPII period. We undertake to formalize or upgrade 5 existing informal settlements countrywide, over the term, by rolling out the Flexible Land Tenure System. Converting Certificates of Occupancy into Title Deeds will be expedited to enable collateralized lending, thereby empowering occupants to purchase and/or develop their own erven.

The Government will also operationalize the Rent Control Board to introduce regulatory measures, while a review of the National Housing Policy is expected to introduce mixed developments and improve affordability of urban land by reducing the size of the standard pavilion from the current 300sqm to a more affordable size.

Fifty percent of the 2021/22 budget has been allocated to the social sectors of health, education & skills training and social welfare, demonstrating Government's commitment and sustained investment into the sectors catering fundamentally for our young people.

The following projects will be undertaken over the term to improve access and strengthen the public health sector:

- Expansion of infrastructure and neo-natal capacity;
- Relocate and modernize the Central Medical Store to guarantee pharmaceutical and clinical supplies;
- Decentralize the dialysis and radiotherapy facilities from Windhoek to Oshakati and Walvis Bay; and
- Formulate the policy framework towards a National Health Insurance.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

Notwithstanding sustained investments into our young people, unemployment affects the youth disproportionately. Our economy has not been growing at the level required to absorb the cohort of new market entrants every year. This could weaken our country's ability to reap a dividend from the sustained demographic investment.

To address the plight of the youth, we undertake to:

- Establish a Teachers' Professional Regulatory Body to improve the quality of training of Educators and prescribe minimum standards for the Profession;
- Finalize the National Human Resource Development Strategy and Implementation Plan to determine priorities and allocate commensurate weights to funding allocation;
- Conclude the Namibia Student Financial Assistance Fund (NSFAF) sustainability model to improve fund administration, coverage and loan recovery;
- Rollout a National Internship & Apprenticeship Programme in collaboration with the Private Sector to enhance Work-Integrated-Learning and improve the transition of graduates into the labour market;
- Applying lessons from HPPI and the TVET sector, we will establish Industry Skills Committees to enable Private Sector contributions towards curriculum reform and demand-driven education at our Universities.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

We witnessed the social activism of our young people, who took to the streets to protest against the scourge of Gender Based Violence, which is perpetrated mostly against our

women and children. To arrest Gender Based Violence (GBV), the Government is prioritizing:

- Training of first responders will be intensified among members of the Namibian Police, Health and Social Workers;
- Refurbishment of 7 Gender Based Violence Protection Units across the country;
- Introduction of specialized courts for the hearing of GBV cases across the country; and
- Undertaking the enactment of a National Sex Offenders Registry & Child Justice Bill in the coming twelve months.

A multi-sectoral approach is required to effectively respond to Gender Based Violence. I therefore renew my call to families, civil-society and faith-based-organisations and all our partners, to intensify complementary community programmes that support Government's efforts to detect, mitigate, respond to and support survivors of GBV.

This evil has no place and will not be tolerated in the Namibian House.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Infrastructure development is a catalyst for economic growth, social progression and contributes significantly to global competitiveness and investment attraction. The HPPII aims to deliver a large-scale infrastructure programme that will also catalyze employment opportunities.

Energy: During the period under review, the nation was concerned about load shedding. By streamlining the policy and legislative environment and through the adoption of the National Integrated Resource Plan which broadened the energy mix to include solar, wind,

gas and diesel, energy supply was secured, without any incidence of load shedding during the period.

Installed generation capacity was increased from 400 MW in 2016 to over 624 MW by 2020. We undertake during the HPPII period to increasing local electricity generation from the current baseline of 624 MW to 879 MW, by commissioning 50 MW of Independent Power Producer projects and additional 220 MW generation capacity by NamPower.

Electrification coverage indicators are currently 19 percent for rural, 71 percent for urban and 45 percent nationally. Out of 1,263 rural schools, a total of 1,049 are electrified, of which 97 were electrified during the HPPI period. During the 2020/21 Financial Year specifically, 23 schools, 2 clinics, 101 households, 10 Business Centres and 13 Community Centres have been electrified.

The National Electricity Master Plan will be finalized during HPPII with a view to address the rural electrification model. Good progress is being made in the development of the National Electrification Policy, which will be finalized and deployed along with the National Electrification Funding Portfolio, over the term.

Water is life. Following the dry spells of drought, we are truly grateful for the abundant rainfalls received in the Southern, Central and Northern parts of our country, this rainy season.

During the period under review, a total of 3,332 sanitation facilities were constructed in 12 regions. To enhance access to potable water, 133 boreholes have been drilled and 88 installed, 57 water points have been rehabilitated and 52 short pipelines were constructed, connecting 1,621 new households, countrywide.

Roads: Namibia has a well-established road infrastructure network, regarded as one of the best on the continent and ranked Number 1 in Africa for Road infrastructure by the World Economic Forum (2021).

Over the term, an additional 819 kilometers of bitumen standard road and 373 kilometers of gravel roads were added to the national road network of more than 44,500 kilometers. During HPPII, an expected 1,480 kilometers of roads will be upgraded to improve access and mobility for Namibians across the country. The following roads have been prioritized during the term:

1. Completion of the Windhoek-Okahandja road to the dual carriageway.
2. Upgrading of the Swakopmund-Henties Bay-Kamanjab road;
3. Upgrading of the Swakopmund-Walvis Bay road to the dual carriageway;
4. Upgrading of the Windhoek–Hosea Kutako International Airport road to the dual carriageway; and
5. Completion of the Gobabis-Aranos Road upgrading to bitumen.

Rail: Government is upgrading the railway network to double the volume of cargo transported between Walvis Bay-Kranzberg-Tsumeb-Oshikango, and Kranzberg-Windhoek. In addition, Government is rehabilitating the track between Tsumeb-Kranzberg–Walvis Bay. This refurbished and upgraded railway track will contribute to the efficient operation of the Trans-Kalahari Corridor network.

Airports: the refurbishment of our Airports will continue in order to strengthen our position as an aviation and logistics hub.

Education infrastructure: To improve the readiness of schools to resume face-to-face teaching, an additional and targeted budget of 800 million Namibian Dollars was allocated to the Ministry of Education, Arts & Culture during the 2020/21 Financial Year, which has benefitted 774 schools with ablution facilities and 193 schools with water provision, countrywide.

Namibia remains an attractive destination for investments in oil and gas, evidenced by the current three (3) onshore wells drilling campaign by Renaissance Energy in block 1819 and 1820 located in the Kavango East and West regions. The company is currently undertaking exploration to confirm the presence of a sedimentary basin otherwise known

as a petroleum system around the general area. Serious consideration of environmental protections are enshrined in our Constitution and cascades down to all levels.

Going forward, under HPPII, the envisioned infrastructure projects will be primarily unlocked through the optimal use of our Public Private Partnership framework and the deployment of catalytic funding through blended financing instruments. The Government will champion the use of project bonds, sustainability bonds and other project financing tools to make this possible.

New projects during the term will include the following:

- Construction of the Erongo desalination plant, which will enable increased output from the mining sector and contribute to water supply security.
- The efficient construction and configuration of a portfolio of national Green schemes will be prioritized to ensure improved productivity and yield, including the Neckartal Green Scheme which is strategically situated next to the Dam.
- The Walvis Bay container terminal was completed under HPPI and is now the subject of much interest from global and local investors, who would like to partner with the Government through our PPP framework, to unlock its full potential.

When combined with the Economic Free Zone and National Single Window Facility this infrastructure will help to strategically position Namibia as a regional logistics hub.

- The Government will explore plans to construct a new deep-water port at Angra Point, off the coast of Luderitz in order to export the Green Hydrogen and Ammonia.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & COOPERATION

Having built our country on the principles of solidarity, freedom and justice, Namibia remains a respected member of the global village.

This is why, during our 31st Independence Anniversary, we received congratulatory messages from over thirty heads of state and government, as well as international organizations.

I would like to touch on a few of these congratulatory messages which include a message from Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom, and His Excellency Xi Jinping of China, with whom I had the pleasure of sharing a historic phone call in 2020. We also received a message from President Joe Biden of the United States of America, who we came to know during our struggle for freedom as a principled Senator who stood firm in the fight against apartheid in South Africa and the Southern African region. We are confident that in President Biden we have a friend with whom we can work for the benefit of our country, region, continent and world. Furthermore, we also received congratulations from President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation, with whom we stand ready to work together to enhance our existing strong and historic bilateral relations.

We further received messages from the President of France, rounding off the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. We further received felicitations from Germany, Japan, India and South Africa.

Honourable Speaker,

Honourable Chairperson,

Fellow Namibians,

While the citizens of Namibia may enjoy many freedoms, there are still many citizens on the continent and the world, for whom freedoms remain only a dream.

In this regard, we reaffirm the Namibian Government's commitment and support towards finding a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, that will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, in accordance with United Nations resolutions 2440 (2018), 2468 (2019) and 2494 (2019).

We thank the Kingdom of Morocco for having supported our struggle for self-determination under the auspices of the United Nations and hope that it will accord the Sahrawi people the same opportunity.

Similarly, the Palestinian people have been the victims of extreme prejudice for several decades and the Government of the Republic of Namibia wishes to express its full solidarity with the Palestinian people as they continue their rightful struggle for self-determination.

The removal of the financial, economic and commercial blockade against Cuba is long overdue. Therefore, we call on the current US Administration to find an amicable solution to this problem in the spirit of good neighbourliness.

In the same vein, we call on the lifting of sanctions against the fraternal people of Zimbabwe, who under the leadership of His Excellency Emmerson Mnangagwa, have embarked on a process of economic reconstruction. Zimbabweans should be allowed to develop their country without outside interference.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

Despite the new unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are assured and confident that in the Southern African Development Community, the African Union and the United Nations, we have time-tested and proven organizations through which we can galvanize regional, continental and international support and solidarity, to overcome

this invisible enemy.

As a member of SADC, Namibia recognizes the interdependence and interconnectivity of member states. Throughout the lockdown periods, Namibia has sought to keep ports and harbours open, in order to facilitate the movement of goods to and from landlocked neighbours and beyond.

Many developmental efforts across the continent have been curtailed by COVID-19. Several high-profile events and fora, which serve as platforms for multilateral dialogue and collaboration have been postponed or cancelled during the past several months. However, even amidst this atmosphere of caution and apprehension, the spirit of Pan Africanism continues to burn brightly.

Even in the face of a crisis, Namibia and Africa as a whole has demonstrated firmly, that this is a continent on the move. In the face of enormous challenges, we have displayed the utmost resilience.

Namibia remains committed to the fulfillment of the aspirations of the African people through Agenda 2063. As a State Party to the African Continental Free-Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA), Namibia stands to benefit greatly from market access within the world's largest free-trade area. We look forward to the full implementation of this landmark agreement.

It is pertinent that countries with a unique situation such as ours with an "Upper Middle Income" classification, should have access to loans and grants commensurate with our needs.

Honourable Speaker,

Honourable Chairperson,

Fellow Namibians,

We are in the Year of Resilience.

Our country faces a test of character, unlike any we have faced since independence. As a nation, we stand at the crossroads. Therefore, we must maintain our focus, remain resolute and keep our eyes on the path that leads to our destiny. The challenge that lies before us may seem insurmountable. However, I am fully convinced that within the Namibian people, exists the talents and gifts to find successful solutions and innovative approaches to our problems, through teamwork, patriotism, solidarity and mutual support.

In the midst of global uncertainty, we are faced with the task of forming a new paradigm for the lives of all Namibians. Each generation in the history of a nation, faces a defining test. Our current test is to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic and restore the economic integrity of the Republic of Namibia.

How we face this test, will eternally define this generation.

In the history of Namibia, our people have always found ways to overcome different challenges. From the Genocidal battlefields of Hornkranz and Ohamakari, the battle of Namutoni, the battle of Lishora and the battle of Kamenga, our people faced untold tribulation, many perished, but they overcame.

From the battle of Omugulu-gwoMbashe, the battle at Oshatotwa, the massacre at Cassinga and Ondeshifilwa, and the triumphant battle of Cuito Cuanavale, many sacrificed but eventually they overcame.

It is our time to overcome.

Life always places us in situations where we were forced to deal with difficulties and where we need to adapt to the requirements of the time as a collective. We cannot shun struggle and we cannot shun responsibility. As a nation united, and a people holding hands, we can stand the test of time and maintain the direction of our strategic course.

Six years ago, I stood proudly in front of the nation and stated that “achieving the goal of prosperity will be a daunting task and although our challenges will be great, I have full confidence that working together as one people, we will rise up to those expectations”. Today, I can proudly state before the nation, that I still share the same enthusiasm. The progress we have made against very difficult odds, gives me optimism that prosperity is not a dream, but a destination that is within our reach.

Ours is the generation that must embody the aspirations of economic independence and prosperity. Under the weight of difficulty, we must remain unbroken, resilient and rise to build a more united and stronger Namibia.

In the true Namibian spirit of unity and resilience, once again, in the face of the storm, we will stand together, hand in hand and we will pull through together. That is the Namibia we know, that is the Namibia we believe in and that is the Namibia we must continue to build.

May God continue to Bless the Republic of Namibia.

Thank You.
