REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS 2012
BY HIS EXCELLENCY
HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBA, PRESIDENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

25 APRIL 2012

WINDHOEK

*Check Against Delivery
Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly,
Honourable Chairperson of the National Council,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Honourable Regional Governors,
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Distinguished Invited Guests,
Members of the Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Fellow Namibians,

I am honoured to stand before this Joint Session of our Parliament and to address our people on the State of the Nation. I will use this occasion to report on the implementation of Government policies in the passing Financial Year, reflect on Government’s planned activities in the new Financial Year and to underscore our resolve to make Namibia stronger, more prosperous and more united for the benefit of all our people.

Namibia is a nation born out of a painful, but heroic history. Our ancestors endured unimaginable cruel treatment, dispossession of their properties and their wealth, mass murder and dislocation from their land. The remains of some of those who died were taken out of the country and denigrated through so-called scientific experiments. However, through the power of their patriotism, they heroically resisted foreign domination. They were determined to protect and defend our land and our heritage to the bitter end. We pay homage to their bravery and gallantry.

In their honour, our Government has decided to repatriate the remains of our heroes and heroines from Germany last year. More remains of our heroes and heroines will be repatriated from Germany and other places outside Namibia in the coming years. We salute these patriots. We are inspired by their unbroken spirit, which sustained our struggle until final victory, and the attainment of freedom and independence 22 years ago.

With the completion of that historic task, a new mission for the economic emancipation of our people commenced. Today, we are continuing with that struggle. Our focus is on the eradication of poverty, provision of adequate social amenities to all our people, education and training, as well as the strengthening of the economy so that it can generate more jobs for greater prosperity of all Namibians.

Achieving these noble goals is by no means an easy task. As such, we must work together and in unity as a nation. I have said it before, and I will say it again, we must always strive to ensure that no Namibian citizen is left behind in our development efforts. In this context, our development approach should be motivated by the belief that all Namibians have a direct stake in the development of our country.

We have, therefore, ensured that the policies and programmes that public institutions implement, are responsive to the needs of the different constituencies that make up our country.
This has been our Government’s focus over the years. It remained our focus during the period under review, namely, the 2011/2012 Financial Year.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

Namibia is not an island. Our economy is intertwined in many ways with the global economy. As a result, the unfolding economic downturn and the global financial crisis have negatively affected our economy, especially the local export-oriented industries. That is the reality of globalization. In order to shield the economy from the effects of the global economic turmoil, our Government adopted accommodative fiscal and monetary policies. Public expenditure was significantly expanded to support domestic demand and reinforce job creation. This expansion did not place undue pressure on our fiscal position. Also, our public debt position did not worsen, thanks to a strong pre-crisis financial position of our Government.

In order to further enhance the administration of our public finances, a Public Finance Reform Programme has been introduced. It includes measures such as widening the tax base, strengthening the administration of tax, and the development of an integrated Tax Policy Reform Programme. In addition, revised Public Procurement Regulations have been published. A new Public Procurement Bill is also receiving attention and will be tabled in Parliament this year.

The revisions in the procurement system are aimed at enhancing its contribution to the economy by supporting economic empowerment of more Namibians and strengthening efficiency and governance in public procurement. I direct that these measures be implemented without delay.

It is a priority of our Government to raise capital from domestic sources in order to fund the budget deficit. We believe that this approach has an added benefit of supporting the development of local capital markets and injecting liquidity into this market.

Last year, other sources of raising capital were considered, including Namibia’s successful issuing of the Eurobond. This enabled our country to raise funds at competitive rates and also diversified our funding sources. At the same time, it raised Namibia’s profile among the international investment community.

In these times of economic uncertainty, we shall continue to safeguard macro-economic stability by ensuring that our fiscal operations remain sustainable. Related to these reforms, is our drive to strengthen our Industrial Policy-environment, to serve as a catalyst for more robust economic growth, job creation and economic empowerment of more Namibians. Towards this end, a comprehensive Industrial Policy for Namibia has been finalized.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,
While successes have been recorded in a number of areas, challenges do persist. We must, therefore, remain steadfast. Let us focus our energies and our attention on addressing the challenges that confront our people and our communities around the country on a daily basis.

Here, I have in mind, the importance of meeting the basic needs of our people, such as access to adequate shelter, food, education, water, electricity, health care, better roads, and other public services. I also have in mind the need to strengthen our economy to attract more investors and to grow steadily in order to create more jobs. This requires better co-ordination in our overall planning framework and for our public institutions to utilize the available resources more prudently. Moreover, we should not only be ready to learn from the successful examples of other countries in Africa and elsewhere, but also from the lessons of history.

Similarly, it is important to reposition our planning processes to become more dynamic and flexible. When and where necessary, we should be able to adjust and even depart from practices that do not yield the desired results. We must be able to adapt our policies as situations change. After all, it is not wise to keep doing the same thing all the time and expect different results.

The national budget is one of the most important tools in the execution of our national development agenda. It is, therefore, important that the budget is not only well-prepared, but also thoroughly executed.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

We have a duty to always strive to build an inclusive, tolerant, safe, peaceful and prosperous society. This requires the energy, the ingenuity, the creativity, the hard work and the contribution of the entire population. We can achieve our goals through hard work, which is the only path to success and prosperity. There are no short-cuts. With this in mind, we must all join hands and work together towards a common goal.

I encourage all our people, especially the youth, to embrace the ethos of hard work. In this manner, we can turn the challenges that we face into opportunities, and we can translate our words into practical actions in order to make a difference.

Our leaders, at all levels, must lead by example. In their respective capacities, leaders must stand at the forefront of the battle to root out corruption, crime, and other social evils. At all times, leaders must conduct themselves as the role models. We must all strive to provide the needed leadership so that our country can move forward with confidence.

At my inauguration as Second President of our Republic in 2005, I expressed my determination to fight corruption. I invited the Namibian people to join me in this fight. This is because I believe that we can build a prosperous Namibia on the bedrock of honesty, transparency and accountability. These are the values that should guide our actions at all times. In the same year, our Government operationalised the Anti-Corruption Act of 2003.
The Anti-Corruption Commission was established one year later, in 2006. The Commission is charged with the task of rooting out the evil of corruption from our society.

Moreover, in order to underscore our resolve, we amended the Namibian Constitution to make the Anti-Corruption Commission, an independent constitutional body. Today, the Commission is a Constitutional body, which is truly independent.

Namibia is one of very few countries in the world, which have an Anti-Corruption Commission that is established in terms of the constitution. Our Government remains fully committed to fighting the cancer of corruption.

Once again, I call upon all Namibians who have any information about corrupt and other unethical practices, to bring such information to the attention of law enforcement agencies, including the Anti-Corruption Commission. This is a joint fight to which all Namibians have a duty to contribute. It will not help to only level criticisms from the sidelines. Get into the arena. Help to turn our words into practical action to make a difference.

The fight against corruption must be broadened and continued on all fronts. It must be waged without fear or favour. In this regard, I direct the Ministry of Justice to expedite the tabling of a strong and comprehensive legislation on the protection of whistle blowers. I believe that such a law will greatly enhance anti-corruption efforts by protecting persons who disclose information on corrupt activities from victimization.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

Throughout history, the people of Namibia have stood together to overcome many adversities. Our ancestors stood and fought together against colonialism and occupation of our country. During the national liberation struggle, we confronted and prevailed against apartheid colonialism, as a united force.

We can only claim our destiny if we remain united as a country, as a nation, and as a people, irrespective of gender, the ethnic groups we belong to, the regions we come from, the religious beliefs that we profess, or the colour of our skin. We are one people, we are one nation. Let us live by these enduring values and desist, at all times, from engaging in activities that have the potential to tear our social fabric apart.

We should not allow the evils of tribalism, ethnicity or racism to rear their ugly heads in our society or to distract us from the task at hand. Let us crush them so that they do not re-appear.

My message to the nation today is: Let us spend our energies on finding solutions to the challenges that confront our people on a daily basis. That is the responsibility of each and every Namibian, especially for those holding positions of leadership in our society.
National unity is the most effective weapon against poverty, hunger and under development. National unity will enable us to develop all corners of Namibia. National unity is the cornerstone of stability, peace and security in our country. It is a pre-condition to Namibia’s development.

Therefore, it should be a duty of every national leader, community leader, traditional leader, church leader, regional leader, local authority leader, village headman and indeed every Namibian citizen to promote the motto of ONE NAMIBIA, ONE NATION. As a united nation, we must reject tribalism with the contempt it deserves.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

I strongly believe that it is neither justifiable, nor sustainable, in the long run, for our country to be rated as the nation with one of the highest levels of income inequality in the world. We should join hands to bring to an end this appalling distinction. In order to promote equity, the wealth of our country should be harnessed to benefit, not only a small minority, but also the majority of the population who have endured poverty, hunger, homelessness and other forms of dispossession for far too long.

It is for this reason that the Government has introduced the New Equitable Economic Empowerment Framework (NEEEF). This is an important tool in our response to the socio-economic plight of our youth, women, the rural poor and our citizens in informal settlements. Their pain and suffering must be brought to an end. I call upon all stakeholders, within the Government and without, to contribute to the full implementation of this initiative.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

The time is ripe and the moment is now for our nation to do all that we can to place our country on a path towards greater social justice and prosperity. Our Government’s strategy to realize the strategic national development goals has always been built around six main pillars, namely:

- capacity building through education and training;
- development, expansion and maintenance of physical and communication infrastructure around the country;
- maintenance of robust economic growth supported by sound macro-economic policies, sound labour relations, value addition, industrialization and broadening the manufacturing base of our economy;
- provision of equitable and high quality public services and social amenities;
- empowerment and socio-economic upliftment of formerly disadvantaged communities, especially those in the rural and peri-urban areas; and
- the maintenance of socio-political stability, peace and security in all parts of the country.
We remain committed to pursuing this developmental course, by ensuring that all our policies and programmes are geared towards the achievement of our stated goals. Towards this end, I re-emphasise the need for greater co-ordination of implementation activities in order to avoid duplication of efforts and wastage of limited resources.

In my State of the Nation Address last year, I reflected on some of the Government’s major developmental and policy initiatives. These include:

- the adoption and commencement of the implementation of the Targeted Intervention Programme for Employment and Economic Growth (TIPEEG);
- the ongoing expansion of the roads and rail infrastructure;
- the implementation of the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP) to improve and strengthen our education and training sector in terms of quality, equity and the provision of text books to our schools; and
- the improvement in the provision of public services such as health care, housing and sanitation, potable water, as well as provision of electricity to households through rural electrification programmes.

I can report today that our Government has been working hard to implement various projects that were funded under the 2011/2012 Budget as well as those ongoing programmes funded under the Medium Term Expenditure Framework or the three year rolling budget. Despite many challenges posed by the global economic crisis as well as other internal and external dynamics, our Government has recorded many successes during the period under review.

On TIPEEG, I can report that the roll out and implementation of this initiative have started. While a number of bottlenecks were initially encountered, the implementation process has picked up speed and gained encouraging momentum. According to the latest information, 26,960 jobs have been created under the development budget, inclusive of TIPEEG. If the recurrent budget is taken into account, more jobs were created. Funds have been transferred to various institutions, such as Offices, Ministries, and Agencies as well as Regional Councils and Local Authorities to execute developmental projects.

Steps were taken by a number of Government institutions not to return to Treasury, funds that were not yet utilized by the end of the 2011/2012 Financial Year. Rather, such funds will be transferred to Regional Councils and Local Authorities to enable them to carry out developmental projects.

This will translate into the creation of new jobs, development of infrastructure and improvements in the delivery of public services to our people. Our Government has also taken a decision to incorporate the implementation of TIPEEG into the Fourth National Development Plan (NDP4). The aim is to enhance internal efficiencies, bring about deeper harmonization in the implementation of national development programmes and achieve the desired outcomes more speedily.
We should leave no stone unturned to achieve a robust and improved implementation of TIPEEG so that it can meet the expectations of the Namibian people, especially with regard to the creation of new jobs.

Similarly, the implementation of infrastructure development projects during the period under review also progressed well. Hundreds of kilometers of roads have been upgraded to bitumen standards, while gravel roads have been constructed in many areas. The new and upgraded roads are changing the face of road transport in Namibia for the better.

Another important component of modernizing our road infrastructure is the maintenance of existing bridges and construction of new ones in different parts of the country. I am pleased to report that the new bridges will be built in different parts of the country during this Financial Year as well as during the 2012/2013 to 2014/2015 MTEF period.

During the period under review, several feeder roads in the rural areas were also completed, using labour-based methods. This is part of the strategy to combat unemployment, impart practical skills to unskilled workers, and thereby empower communities. These investments in road infrastructure have already and will continue to facilitate faster and safer movement of people and goods on our national road arteries, while enhancing trade and commerce.

I wish to use this opportunity to call upon all stakeholders to promote road safety. Let us stop the loss of lives and injuries on our roads.

With regard to the expansion of our rail network, I am happy to announce that the railway line from Ondangwa has reached the Oshikango Border post. As a result, Namibia now has a railway network covering the entire north-south stretch of the country, from the Ariamsvlei Border Post to Oshikango. This is a great achievement by our nation.

The completion of this project has opened up new opportunities for trade and commerce between Namibia and her neighbours both to the south and the north. It will also help to reduce the number of heavy trucks on our roads and indeed minimize the damage that they cause to our roads. It is another demonstration that indeed, we are turning challenges into opportunities, and our words into practical action in order to make a difference. The envisaged construction of the Trans-Kalahari Railway Line, in which our two countries are participating, will link the Namibian Railway network to that of Botswana in the east.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

Our focus on the improvement and provision of quality education and training to our people remains firm. We are committed to ensuring that our education system attains success at all levels. In order to succeed, effective complementarities must be created in our education system from the Pre-primary Phase, right through to the tertiary level.
This implies that the pre-primary and primary phases of our education must be adequately staffed, resourced and equipped in order to lay a strong foundation for our children to perform well in the high school phase.

This requires increased attention to improving the capacity of our teachers to teach effectively, especially in the critical subjects of mathematics and science. It requires greater motivation for school administrators, and education planners as well as the involvement of parents, guardians and communities in the education of Namibian children.

It also requires the households and the education authorities to instill a high level of discipline in all our school-going children. There should be no doubt that discipline is an important element in the success or failure of our education system. Without discipline, hard work and respect for teachers and school authorities, the passing rate in our schools will remain disappointing.

In the same vein, our high schools must produce competent learners, with strong literacy and numeracy skills, who are capable of undertaking tertiary education or to successfully complete vocational training programmes. Similarly, our tertiary education institutions must produce graduates with the needed skills and competencies to successfully participate in the modern economy. We must train innovative graduates from tertiary institutions who can help develop our country.

Equally important, Namibia needs a comprehensive and well-articulated Plan to develop our human resources capacity. Such a Plan should set clear and concrete targets with respect to the categories of professionals that we need to train, outline the required financial resources, and spell out explicitly all that we need to do in the area of capacity building in order to achieve the desired goals.

I, direct the National Planning Commission to finalize, without delay, the development of the National Human Resources Plan that will provide the policy parameters and the strategic direction for our country’s human resources development.

The preliminary results of the 2011 National Population and Housing Census were released this month. They indicate that there are now 2.1 million people in Namibia. These results are an important tool for our Government to plan more effectively and accurately in the provision of public services such as education, health care, potable water, electricity, housing, infrastructure and other services to our people.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

Recent reports about Namibia’s low international rankings in the utilization of information communication technology (ICT) is a cause for great concern. Our country cannot afford to lag behind in this area, because it is vital to the competitiveness of our nation. In this context, Namibia must devise a broad ICT Roll-Out Plan to ensure that more of our people, especially the youth have access to ICT training and skills.
Last year, I reported in this august house that, through MTC and Telecom Namibia, our country has made massive investments in the West Africa Cable System (WACS). We were told that WACS would revolutionize the ICT landscape in Namibia. Now, we want to see the results.

We want to see our SMEs using the Internet to communicate with their suppliers and to market their products and services to the public. We want to see our learners in all parts of the country using the Internet to conduct academic research and communicate with their teachers and fellow students. We want to see increased use of ICT in our health facilities and even in households across the nation. Our people must start to benefit from the promised ICT revolution.

I am pleased to report that our Government has allocated approximately N$300 million to provide free internet connectivity to public facilities such as schools, hospitals, government buildings and airports, starting with this Financial Year. I am also pleased that a programme has been initiated by the Ministry of Education to introduce computer education in schools. These are steps in the right direction.

I, therefore, direct all relevant institutions and stakeholders to put the needed measures in place so that the investment we have made in WACS can bring about the promised benefits to our country. We expect lower costs and broader availability of ICT services in all corners of the country. Other nations have done it. I believe that Namibia can do it too!

Honourable Speaker
Honourable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

The provision of quality, affordable and accessible health care remains an important priority for the SWAPO Party Government. Hence, during the review period, Government continued with the renovation of existing health facilities and the construction of new clinics, health centres and hospitals. Our Government also made funds available for the establishment of specialized medical units and the procurement of ultra-modern medical equipment for our health facilities. In this regard, we have equipped the Cardiac Unit and the Cancer Unit.

Today, we are saving substantial amounts of money as more and more patients suffering from diseases such as cancer and heart ailments are treated here at home, instead of sending them to other countries for medical care. This is part of the national strategy to improve health care.

The improvements in health care delivery must go hand-in-hand with improved hygiene and better maintenance of health care equipment at all our health facilities. Our public health facilities are places where the health of our people is to be promoted and nurtured. They must, therefore, be at the forefront of promoting basic hygiene. The current situation where basic hygiene has been neglected at some health facilities around the country must come to an end.

I direct that the cleaning of public buildings and their surroundings be improved without delay. In addition, urgent repairs to the existing dilapidated health facilities and other public buildings should be carried out without any further delay.
Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

The majority of our people live in rural and peri-urban areas, where the provision of public services and social amenities, such as potable water, electricity, housing and sanitation remain inadequate. We need to do more in order to expand physical and communication infrastructure such as roads in those areas. This is a very important and urgent imperative.

To address these challenges, our Government has designed specific interventions and allocated resources to improve social and economic development in our rural and peri-urban areas. The aim is to turn our plans into practical actions in order to make a difference.

Last year, Parliament approved the Local and Regional Economic Development White Paper for Namibia. The document outlines a strategy for boosting economic development activities by Local Authorities and Regional Councils. In the current Financial Year, Government has allocated an amount of more than N$402 million in subsidies to local authorities.

I am happy to report that within the next five years, all schools in the rural areas will be electrified. In terms of the 5 Year Rural Electrification Distribution Master Plan, which was launched this month, the Ministry of Mines and Energy will work closely together with Regional Councils and Local Authorities in order to identify priority areas that require urgent attention. In addition to the schools, other facilities in the communities, such as clinics, market places, churches and households within an identified radius of electrification projects will also be electrified.

This is part of the on-going anti-poverty and rural development measures that are aimed at improving the living conditions of our people. Other measures include the provision of potable water, housing, land, agricultural extension services and social support to the elderly, people with disabilities and the veterans of the armed liberation struggle.

Substantial resources are allocated to these sectors in the current budget and during the 2012/2013 to 2014/2015 MTEF period. We particularly need to expedite the land acquisition programme in order to resettle more people. This must be accompanied by support measures to help resettled farmers to become productive.

Similarly, we must expand the reach of agricultural extension services in order to improve the productivity of subsistence farmers.

I am pleased to report that Government support to the veterans of the national liberation struggle has gained momentum. To date, thousands of veterans have received lump sum payments. The Ministry of Veterans Affairs has also approved funding for a number of projects initiated by veterans under the Veterans' Support Programme.
We should continue to adopt policies aimed at protecting our environment and our ecosystems. In this regard, the mining, fisheries, tourism and agricultural sectors should enjoy top priority. As one of the countries most negatively affected by the impact of global warming, Namibia will participate in the Rio +20 Environmental Conference in June this year.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

Peace and stability are vital pre-requisites for social and economic development. It is for this reason that our Government is committed to the maintenance of peace and security in all parts of the country. Resources have been and will continue to be allocated to our criminal justice system to carry out their mandate of protecting the lives and properties of our people, the territorial integrity of our country and to maintain law and order.

The aim of the national struggle was to liberate every inch of Namibian territory. With independence, Article 1(4) of the Namibian Constitution defined the international boundaries of our country. As such, our boundaries are recognized internationally and the territorial integrity of Namibia is non-negotiable. Thus, no individual or group can unilaterally change them.

It is our duty as Namibians to promote national unity, not to harbor retrogressive tendencies of secession. Let us all embrace unity and focus our energies on developing our country. Our survival depends on greater unity rather than division.

At the regional level, SADC is working towards deeper integration. African leaders are also working hard towards continental integration within the framework of the African Union. I believe that we can learn useful lessons from continental Europe, where closer integration has been achieved.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

Our Government is concerned about the increasing cases of crime such as murder, robberies as well as violence against women, children and other vulnerable members of our society. Incidents of women and girls who have been raped or attacked occur too frequently. Our Government will intensify efforts to combat this scourge and bring all perpetrators to book. In this regard, we will continue to strengthen our criminal justice system.

The ongoing campaign to increase public awareness about the dangers of gender-based violence will be intensified. I, once again, call upon Namibian men to desist from the barbaric behaviour of attacking our women and children. We are also concerned about rampant alcohol abuse in our country. Let us enforce the existing laws in order to prevent this problem from spinning out of control.
During the period under review, the Namibian Police recruited and trained new members of the police force. These new policemen and women have already been deployed to different parts of the country in order to help combat crime. We will continue to provide financial and other resources to our police so that our people can continue to live in peace and safety.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

Our bilateral and multilateral relations are the mirrors through which the image of our country is reflected to the outside world. We should, therefore, continue to pursue a foreign policy that strengthens our nation’s standing in the community of nations and reflects our values as a nation, in line with the principles of our Constitution.

We must continue to stand by the principles of solidarity, promotion and maintenance of international peace and security, and peaceful resolution of conflicts. During the period under review, we pursued the objectives of our foreign policy through our participation in the activities of international, continental and regional organizations.

Presently, Namibian men and women, from the Namibia Defense Force and the Namibian Police, are serving as peace-keepers in various UN and AU missions around the world. We are proud of these fellow Namibians for holding our flag high in different parts of the world.

For the past seven years, Namibia has served as a Member of the Committee of Ten of the African Union Heads of State and Government. This committee is tasked with championing the African Common Position on the Reform of the United Nations’ Security Council.

For a period of one year, from August 2010 to August 2011, Namibia served as Chair of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). During our tenure, Namibia played a vital role in helping to generate sustained momentum towards the resolution of the political stalemate in Madagascar. It is encouraging that the Malagasy Parties have initialed a Road Map that will pave the way towards the holding of democratic elections in that country.

In June last year, I had the singular honour to co-chair the historic Tri-Partite Summit comprising COMESA, East African Community and SADC. At the same Summit, negotiations were launched for the establishment of the largest Free Trade Area on the African continent.

We noted with concern the unprecedented political upheavals that occurred in North Africa and parts of the Middle East in the last twelve months. In the Horn of Africa, the region experienced a devastating drought and famine, which led to the deaths of many people. The recent over throw of civilian authorities in Mali and Guinea Bissau, have cast a dark shadow on the efforts to strength democratic governance on our continent.

We are also concerned about the escalating conflict between Sudan and South Sudan. We therefore call for a peaceful solution to the conflict. Reason should prevail so that the current conflict does not evolve into full-scale warfare.
Namibia will continue to consistently call for restraint and for the speedy resolution of all conflicts in order to spare civilian populations from harm.

On a positive note, Namibia has congratulated His Excellency Macky Sall, on his victory in the Presidential Elections and for the peaceful transition of power in Senegal.

We also expressed admiration for the peaceful transition of power in Malawi, to Her Excellency Joyce Banda, the second woman President on the continent, following the untimely death of President Bingu wa Mutharika on 5th April 2012. Late President Bingu wa Mutharika was a champion for food self-sufficiency on the continent. We pay homage to this great son of Africa.

Let us also pay homage to a great Pan Africanist, the former President of Algeria, Ahmed Ben Bella, who passed away earlier this month. May I, kindly request all of you to rise and observe a minute of silence in memory of these great leaders. [Thank you very much. Please be seated].

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,
Fellow Namibians,

Our nation is on the move. We have taken irreversible steps towards building a safer, more inclusive, united and more prosperous society. We must continue to hold hands and work harder to achieve our common objectives. The challenges we face must be turned into opportunities for development, advancement and empowerment of our communities.

Our words and our policies must be turned into practical actions in order to make a difference.

The successes in our policy implementation endeavours must be measured in terms of the number of Namibians that are lifted from poverty, the number of young people who graduate from our tertiary institutions, the number of new employment opportunities that are created in our economy, the number of local entrepreneurs who are assisted to run their businesses sustainably and indeed in the overall improvement in the living conditions of our people.

Going forward, our Government will continue to put the interests of our people and our nation at the centre of all our development endeavours. We will work, not only harder, but also smarter in order to achieve our stated goals and objectives. I have directed all Offices, Ministries and Agencies to ensure that all planned projects and programmes are implemented on time and within budget.

I have also directed that Regional Councils and Local Authorities be provided with the necessary support in order to capacitate them to successfully undertake developmental activities in their respective localities.

I call upon the private sector to work with the Government in order to strengthen the economy so that we can successfully combat unemployment.

I call upon the law enforcement agencies to do more in order to combat the evil of crime and to bring all perpetrators to book.
I call upon our teachers to continue teaching with dedication and skill so that we can achieve academic excellence at all levels of our education system. Indeed, I call upon the nation to work together and in unity, to help build a better Namibia, not only for the present, but also for future generations. By working together, we can ensure that the State of our Nation remains strong.

Yes, there are challenges. However, these challenges should be seen as opportunities for our nation to advance forward. Similarly, we should not only speak convincing words. Our words must be turned into practical actions in order to make a difference.

We are determined to ensure that we address the socio-economic needs of our youth, women, the rural poor, senior citizens, orphans, workers and our people who live in rural areas and informal settlements.

We are determined to make Namibia a winning nation. ONE NAMIBIA, ONE NATION!

Long Live the Republic of Namibia!

I thank you.