Inaugural Address By His Excellency President HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBA

Director of Ceremonies,
Your Excellency, Father of the Namibian Nation and My Predecessor, Comrade Sam Shafiishuuna Nujoma,
Your Excellency President Olusegun Obasanjo of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Chairman of the African Union (AU),
Your Majesties,
Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,
Former Heads of State and Government,
Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly,
Honourable Chairperson of the National Council,
Honourable Chief Justice of the Republic of Namibia,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Leaders of Political Parties,
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Distinguished Invited Guests,
Fellow Namibians:

1. I stand before you today filled with pride, gratitude and humility. A little while ago, I took a solemn oath to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia. I swore that I will, from this day on, dedicate myself to the service and well-being of the people of Namibia, without exception, and to do right to all.

2. Once again, a new dawn has set on our beautiful country. Once again, we stand at the delicate moment when a nation pauses, takes a look at itself and recharges its energy and renews itself for the greater challenges that lie ahead. From this day onwards, our country will continue to be coast towards the future as a united, democratic, and prosperous nation.

3. I give special thanks to all the good people of this country who freely and overwhelmingly renewed the mandate of the SWAPO Party and reposed their confidence in me by electing me as the 2nd President of the Republic of Namibia to lead this country for the next five years. I accept your mandate with sincere gratitude and humility. Your unequivocal support gives me the courage to face the challenges that lie before us.

4. I wish to pay special tribute to the great and gallant Namibians who lost their lives in the cause of the struggle for liberty, democracy and freedom. They held the beacon of freedom and liberty high in the face of a long and bitter struggle. Their sacrifices have not been in vain. We will always remember them. It is, therefore, befitting that I took the oath of Office here at the Independence Stadium, a shrine at which the first President and the founding Father of our Nation Comrade Sam Shafiishuuna Nujoma took the oath of Office on 21st March 1990. On that historic day we opened the way for the birth of the sovereign, secular, democratic and unitary Namibian state.

5. I would, therefore, like to express my deep-founded appreciation to Comrade Sam Nujoma, the legendary freedom fighter, leader of the national liberation struggle and founding President of the SWAPO Party, the first President of the Republic of Namibia for having nominated me to contest the SWAPO Party’s primaries for the election of the SWAPO Party’s Republican presidential candidate. I also thank him from the bottom of my heart for his support
and encouragement during the election campaign in November last year. Comrade President Nujoma will go down in history with distinction for uniting and leading the Namibian people in the struggle for national independence; for fostering peace, stability, security and national reconciliation; and for spearheading the social and economic reconstruction of Namibia.

6. The achievements of President Nujoma throughout the years of his illustrious leadership should inspire all Namibians to emulate his self-sacrifice and dedication to service. We must endeavour to uphold the legacy of President Nujoma by continuing to maintain unity, peace, security, stability and prosperity. Our Government will always knock at his door to give us advice in our endeavours. May his wisdom remain at the service of the nation, and may he continue to enjoy good health for many years to come.

7. I welcome Your Excellencies, Your Majesties and Your Royal Highnesses, and honourable dignitaries and distinguished guests to this historic inaugural ceremony. I feel greatly honoured that so many of you could travel from all corners of the globe and from all parts of our country to lend importance and dignity to this occasion. I thank you most sincerely for your presence which, in itself, constitutes a tribute to the tens of thousands of our people and a profound statement of hope that all of us will, together, continue to expand the frontiers of human development and dignity.

Fellow Namibians,

8. This day serves not only as the day on which I inherit the mantle of office of President of Namibia. It is also, a day for celebrating fifteen years of our independence. On that historic day of 21 March 1990, after a protracted and bitter struggle, we achieved our objective of political emancipation when we hoisted the Namibian flag of freedom, independence and sovereignty, and lowered, for the very last time, the apartheid flag, which represented colonialism, with all its ugly faces, white minority domination and oppression. The vote for freedom and democracy was, and remains, an irreversible choice by all our people. We have every reason to believe that a brighter future shines on the horizon for our country. We are forging one united nation on the anvil of our collective sweat and blood; it is a nation tempered in the crucibles of our collective determination. This is the triumph of freedom and democracy.

Fellow Namibians,

9. During the past fifteen years, we have demonstrated that our goals are achievable. Above all, Namibians have shown that by joining hands and working together, even the most difficult problems can be overcome.

10. Our policy of national reconciliation has contributed to creating a society that is largely in harmony and at peace with itself. However, it is important that national reconciliation becomes a two-way process. We must all embrace it. We must remember that we have a common destiny. It is time for all of us to embrace our diverse cultures. It is time for all of us to rally behind one another as one people with a common destiny. It is time for all of us to prepare the ground for our children and their children’s children.

11. Now, more than ever, we must be united. Just as unity was vital in the liberation struggle, it is still very important for the implementation of our common objectives. That is the only way in which the nation can prioritise its needs and fully exploit its potential. A divided community spends valuable time in internal wrangles that can only sap its strength and ensure its failure. In the famous words of my predecessor, Comrade Nujoma, “a people united, striving to achieve common good for all members of the society, will always emerge victorious”.

Fellow Namibians,

12. We will continue to pursue the policy of sacrifice and hard work that was initiated by
our SWAPO Party Government. As before, there will be zero tolerance for waste and corruption in public life. I, therefore, make a solemn pledge to you my compatriots, and fellow citizens that I shall set a personal example.

13. Our experience in the past fifteen years has informed a new realism in our approach to serving the people. I am conscious that peace, security and stability we enjoy today will have to be accompanied by sustainable economic growth, social development, discipline and self-sacrifice. The question of disparity in socio-economic development, unemployment and poverty will only be addressed effectively if we transform the Namibian economy and accelerate economic growth. This should be done with a strong emphasis on empowering the previously disadvantaged citizens through education, training, and skills development underpinned by efficient economic management and productivity. Let us, therefore, not leave a legacy of high-sounding ambitions and unrealized dreams. Let us, together, set out to make a positive difference. Let us stay the course and not deviate from the chosen path of selfless devotion to duty, honour, integrity and diligence which my predecessor walked.

14. Equally important is the need to redouble our efforts in our collective fight against HIV/AIDS. The scourge of HIV/AIDS is a serious socio-economic problem with a devastating effect on the social fabric of our country. The rate at which the disease is spreading is alarming and the care of the increasing numbers of people affected by HIV/AIDS puts a heavy burden on our health and financial resources. We will, therefore, work towards increasing our efforts and ensuring that existing strategies are complemented with additional multifaceted efforts from all sections of society.

Fellow Namibians,

15. We pledge to you, the people of Namibia, that we will continue to devise programmes and projects aimed at meeting the expectations and aspiration of our people who have consistently given the SWAPO Party the mandate to govern since independence.

16. I pay special tribute to all Namibians who continue to have confidence in the SWAPO Party as the Party for change and progress. We must unite as one nation and one people to build a safe and prosperous Namibia. I call on all Namibians to work with our new Government to realise the enormous potential of our country. Let us smile and take that smile with us into tomorrow as we continue to work hard to attain socio-economic development within the framework of Vision 2030, which is our roadmap for peace, stability, security and socio-economic development.

17. I call on the rank and file and supporters of the SWAPO Party to rally behind the Party and its Government, in one formation, as they have done in the past. This will assist our Government in its efforts to maintain peace, security and stability, in its efforts to attain all-round development for all Namibians. Without your advice and support we can not achieve much. I thank you for your consistent support.

18. I pay tribute to all the workers of this nation. It is their diligence and dedication that have transformed the economy of this country from a colonial economy to a free, participatory economy. It is their toil that continues to sustain and nourish the economy, that continues to give us the means to tackle the nation’s developmental goals. We are aware that some of our workers work under very harsh and inhumane conditions for a mere pittance, in most cases. Our Government will ensure that the new Labour Act that my predecessor promulgated last year is brought into force shortly. It is a comprehensive legal framework to deal with many of the problems that confront our workers.

19. I am happy to note that my predecessor laid a strong foundation in the form of
legislative and administrative measures necessary for the protection and promotion of the rights and interests of women. The incoming SWAPO Party Government will continue to build on the gains scored by our previous SWAPO Party Government in this regard by ensuring that the protection and promotion of the rights and interests of Namibian women are realised to a marked degree. We are all aware of the invaluable contribution and commendable sacrifices that our women made during the liberation struggle, as well as their useful contribution in nation-building and national development in Independent Namibia. We will always be indebted to them.

20. Our Government, like the previous Government, will always look up to our senior citizens and elders for their inestimable advice and support. They played a critical role in the struggle for independence; they continue to play a pivotal role in nation-building and socio-economic development. I salute them. Our Government will continue to look for ways and means of showing the nation’s appreciation for what our senior citizens and elders have done to make Namibia what it is today—a free, progressive and forward-looking country.

21. It has always been said that traditional leaders are custodians of our cultural heritage; they are also promoters of our traditional values—without these we will be lost as a nation. We will, therefore, always hold them in high esteem. We will continue to rely on the Council of Traditional Leaders to advise us on critical matters such as control and utilization of communal land and customary law.

22. I wish also to pay tribute to the youth of our country. Like their older compatriots, the youth also played an important role in the armed liberation struggle. They continue to play an important role in the struggle for socio-economic development. I am aware that the youth are the political, business, traditional, academic and community leaders of tomorrow. They must, therefore, be prepared sufficiently to make them useful and decent members of our society. We will, therefore, continue to place education and training of the youth at the top of the agenda for development. We will also continue to allocate a sizeable part of the national budget to education and training of our youth so as to equip them with the tools they need to contribute meaningfully to socio-economic development of our country.

Fellow Namibians,

23. Some of us identify ourselves with our noble and hardworking peasants. We are a part of them. We salute them for their persistent contribution to economic development, particularly of the rural areas, under very harsh conditions and meagre resources. I reaffirm the policy of the SWAPO Party Government to uplift the living standards of our rural population to enable them to contribute to our ongoing efforts to attain socio-economic development. In this regard, we will initiate and strengthen programmes and projects that conduce to improved agricultural output, that provide safe drinking water, electricity, adequate and affordable medical facilities and service, and improved infrastructures like feeder roads.

24. I wish to pay tribute also to the business community. Their business activities not only bring in revenue needed for national sustenance and development but also employment and income to Namibian workers. The good relations that existed between the business community and the SWAPO Party Government, under the leadership of my predecessor, will be cemented and strengthened to ensure the building of a strong economy for the benefit of the whole country.

25. Last but not least, I pay tribute to religious and spiritual leaders of our country and their religious organisations. They have always promoted the religious upbringing of our people and looked after the spiritual side of our existence. Their unshakable and persistent stand against
apartheid colonialism is well known. They continue to fight for social emancipation and social justice with usual vigour and single-mindedness. On our part, we will always call on them for advice and support in our effort to maintain peace, stability and security and to promote reconciliation and social justice in Namibia.

**Fellow Namibians,**

26. Let me thank our international friends who, together with us, fought for Namibia’s freedom and independence. Namibia gained her independence under the banner of solidarity, freedom and justice. To that end, Namibia will pursue a dynamic foreign policy to promote friendly relations with all nations. It will also continue to play a constructive role in the United Nations, the Commonwealth, the African Union, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and other international bodies.

27. Today, more than ever before, there is a need for a strengthened United Nations, an organization fully geared to respond to new challenges and which reflects the realities of our time. Namibia will continue to support the United Nations reform efforts including the need for the Security Council to be more representative and gain capacity for maintaining peace in the world. We will continue to support the humanitarian and development programmes of the United Nations. Nonetheless, the reform of the UN, including the UN Security Council, to make it more representative and democratic so as to preserve its legitimacy and credibility remains a critical objective. Equally, the need for the reform of the world financial institutions to be more responsive to the needs and the realities of developing countries cannot be over-emphasised.

28. In this connection, Namibia will continue to play her role to ensure the success of the African Union and its programme, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). We will continue to support the strengthening of the AU’s capacity for conflict prevention, resolution and management across the continent. We cannot hope to build a vibrant and prosperous Namibia unless we are at peace with our neighbours. A peaceful Namibia needs peaceful neighbours, peaceful continent and peaceful world.

29. We will continue to promote Namibia’s membership of SACU and SADC as pillars of the southern African economic community. In addition, we will also continue to pursue the policy of the Non-Aligned Movement, good neighbourliness and peaceful co-existence and cooperation, including South-South cooperation. We will further continue to support regional integration in the sub-region through SADC in order to maintain peace, and pull our efforts towards economic development. In addition, there is a need for the rationalization and strengthening of regional economic communities (RECs) and the involvement of the private sector and civil society across the continent.

**Fellow Namibians,**

30. I am convinced that we can live in peace and harmony, because the power of our common values and goals exceeds our differences. Our strength lies in the colourful diversity of the Namibian people, and in our different backgrounds, skills, and knowledge.

31. During my tenure, I will do my best to serve all Namibians. In this task, I need your support and assistance. Let us not be afraid of the difficulties and uncertainties ahead. Instead, let us build on co-operation, mutual understanding and trust.

32. With the support of all of you, the people of Namibia, and our friends from across the world, we will lead you to a prosperous, progressive and peaceful Namibia, and serve you with justice and with fairness.

I thank you.
LONG LIVE THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA