

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY,
DR. HAGE G. GEINGOB,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA,
AT THE LAUNCH
OF THE
DR THEO-BEN GURIRAB LECTURE SERIES**

JULY 31, 2017

WINDHOEK

Director of Ceremonies;

Comrade Dr. Nickey Iyambo, Vice-President of the Republic of Namibia;

Comrade Hifikepunye Lukas Pohamba, Second President of the Republic of Namibia;

The Rt. Hon. Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia;

Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi, Speaker of the National Assembly;

Hon. Margaret Mensah-Williams, Chairperson of the National Council;

Your Lordship, Chief Justice Peter Shivute;

Hon. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Co-Operation;

Madam Monica Geingos, First Lady of the Republic of Namibia;

Former Prime Ministers and Deputy Prime Ministers;

Hon. Ministers and Deputy Ministers;

Hon. Members of Parliament;

**Comrade Nangolo Mbumba,
Secretary-General of the Governing
Party, SWAPO; and
Hon. McHenry Venaani, Leader of
the official Opposition;
Local and international speakers
and moderators;
Your Excellencies, Namibian
Ambassadors and High
Commissioners;
Dean of the Diplomatic Corps;
Members of the Media;
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Human beings have been practicing diplomacy for centuries. Since the formation of the first city-states, diplomacy has played its role as one of the defining elements of a state. It is therefore paramount, that every nation positions itself in the global arena, through defining and applying its foreign policy, which will guide its activities and relationships in interacting with other states.

On July 25, 2016, when I opened the Conference on the Review of Namibia's International Relations and Cooperation, I referred to the dynamism of a changing world order and modern day diplomacy. I spoke of an ever changing diplomatic landscape where States are no longer the only role players, but where they have been joined by multilateral institutions, non-governmental organizations, private sector as well as charismatic individuals who are all playing an active role in international relations. It is therefore a pleasure to welcome this evening, a mix

of invitees hailing from a variety of professional backgrounds, to the inaugural lecture series named after Dr Theopold-Benjamin Gurirab, the first Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia.

Foreign policy's role in promoting a country's development is a matter of great importance for understanding its national trajectory, especially in the case of an emerging country. The international dynamics that define our modern world have been greatly

influenced by the emergence of what are referred to as middle-income nations, or emerging powers, whose main goal both domestically and internationally has been to promote their development and to increase their stature and presence. In a paper titled *Foreign Policy and Diplomacy: Diplomacy as a Technique for Foreign Policy*, Appu Nath describes Foreign Policy as the key element in the process by which a state translates its broadly conceived goals and interests into concrete course of action to set objectives and preserve interests.

Namibia's goals and interests are defined by our Vision 2030, the supporting National Development Plans, as well as by our Harambee Prosperity Plan. These plans plot the course of our developmental trajectory and the course on which we would like to take our country during the next several decades. It is therefore crucial that our Foreign Policy speaks to these domestic goals and help translate them into concrete actions which will help achieve our developmental objectives.

Today, we need to go beyond the dictionary definition of foreign policy as “a policy pursued by a nation in its dealings with other nations, designed to achieve national objectives.” It must also have a larger dimension of global welfare – we need to be involved in the Southern African Development Community for the welfare of our region; in the African Union for the welfare of Africa, and in other agencies, including the United Nations and its agencies dealing with international issues. We need to be

concerned about conflicts, drought, and refugee problems in Africa and beyond. We need to work relentlessly to address the challenges of global warming, global trade, and terrorism.

This decade has posed many foreign policy challenges for a country that anchors its foreign policy in principles it shares with the United Nations. During this decade we have seen economic boom and bust, increased social and economic inequality, challenges to human rights, terrible poverty,

intractable wars in many parts of Africa, and the Middle East, refugee problems, threats of terrorism, evolution of social media and the resulting change in the dynamics of democracy, challenges posed by climate change, isolationist policies of certain states, threats to global trade and other international agreements. These are the challenges that impact upon what is in the interest of our country and the principles we stand for.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the last 50 odd years, SWAPO and independent Namibia have gone through three phases of formulating and following through their foreign policy initiatives. The first phase was during our struggle for independence when it was important for us to ensure that the United Nations and the international community including as many sovereign states and non-governmental organizations as possible continued to support our right to independence. The second phase involved our ensuring that our position was not compromised during

the negotiating process that led to the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 435. Finally, the third phase is the one we are in now – the foreign policy of independent Namibia.

All through these phases, my illustrious friend and comrade, Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, was our spokesperson in various international fora including the United Nations, where he promoted our position bilaterally, as well as multilaterally in

various countries, organizations, and international agencies.

Comrade Gurirab's name is synonymous with diplomacy, and I am delighted to be here to honour him and to reflect on our foreign policy perspective, in a world where international milieu has become more dynamic than ever before. I would now like to highlight some of the accomplishments of this distinguished diplomat, after which, we should all be clear as to why this lecture series is

named the Dr Theo-Ben Gurirab Lecture Series.

Theo-Ben Gurirab, SWAPO representative to the UN

Comrade Theo-Ben Gurirab served as Deputy Representative and Petitioner on Namibia to the United Nations and the Americas from 1964 to 1972, and as Chief Representative of the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) from 1972 – 1986. In the person of

Theo-Ben Gurirab, SWAPO had a leading and consummate diplomat at the United Nations who helped engineer the metamorphosis of SWAPO from a mere movement of petitioners, to a mainstream movement of negotiators and participants in the international arena.

Not surprisingly, the UN General Assembly recognized SWAPO in 1976 as the sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people. As such, Comrade

Gurirab became the Permanent Observer to the United Nations, as SWAPO now had observer status in the General Assembly. During the 14 years that he served and represented the interests of SWAPO and Namibia at the UN, his efforts contributed enormously to the growing political and diplomatic status of SWAPO, to become an organization with high standing, and one that was recognized as indispensable to the resolution of the question of Namibia. Therefore, it was a true highlight of his career when UN Security Council

Resolution 435 (1978) was adopted, thus heralding Namibia's independence.

Theo-Ben Gurirab as President of the UN General Assembly (UNGA)

Few people can claim to have known and worked with three generations of world leaders, and five Secretaries-General of the United Nations, who are U Thant, Kurt Waldheim, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Kofi Annan. Comrade Theo-Ben Gurirab, however can proudly make that claim.

It was not only a personal recognition, but a Namibian honour when he assumed the Presidency of the 54th Session of the United National General Assembly (UNGA) from September 1999 until September 2000. His Presidency coincided with Namibia's membership to the Security Council, which ran from January 1999 to December 2000.

Achievements and highlights were numerous during his tenure as President of the UNGA. But maybe the most memorable is when Comrade Theo-Ben

Gurirab presided over the negotiation of the UN Millennium Declaration, which was subsequently adopted by the Millennium Summit in 2000, which was co-chaired by President Dr Sam Nujoma and Her Excellency Tarja Halonen President of Finland. This Declaration was the basis for setting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which we all recognize as the single most comprehensive, inclusive, and globally embraced poverty-focused development agenda.

Namibia's Membership to the UN Security Council

Namibia was unanimously elected to one of the ten non-permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council for the period starting 1 January 1999 and ending 31 December 2000. The Namibian team in the Security Council received constant guidance from Dr Gurirab, even though his responsibilities

were numerous, as President of the General Assembly.

Although every issue before the Security Council is important due to its impact on the maintenance of international peace and security, Namibia during its tenure on the UN Security Council, attached great importance to the situations in Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Middle East, Western Sahara, East Timor, the resolution on Children in Armed Conflict, the resolution on Women, Peace and Security, the

Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict as well as Peacekeeping Operations in general.

Namibia made its mark in the Security Council in 1999, when after almost a decade of the Security Council not discussing the question of Palestine, Namibia broke the impasse. Namibia arranged an open meeting of the Security Council on Palestine and invited President Yasser Arafat to the meeting. Not only that, in October 2000, during Namibia's presidency of the UN Security

Council, a public meeting of the UN Security Council on Women, Peace and Security was arranged, culminating in the adoption of the now famous UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Given our history and taking into account the indispensable contribution made by Namibian Women to our struggle for national liberation, we were determined to show to the International community that women in conflict situations can not only be victims but can also contribute to peace making, peace building and peace keeping.

This open meeting was presided over by Dr Theo-Ben Gurirab in his capacity as Minister of the Foreign Affairs.

President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

On October 15, 2008, at the 183rd session of the Governing Council of the IPU in Geneva, Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab was elected as President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) for a three-year mandate.

During his tenure, the IPU adopted its strategic road map, which would guide the work of the organization. The IPU has also played a leading role in debating the effects of the worldwide economic and financial crisis, and to determine what parliaments, governments and the international community can do to mitigate the negative effects on people's livelihoods.

As President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Dr. Gurirab took keen interest in issues of international peace and

security, as well as global warming. At the conclusion of his term in October 19, 2011, the Governing Council conferred on him the title of the **Honorary President of the IPU.**

Although I have focused my recognition of Comrade Gurirab on his role in the international arena, I must also mention the fact that he has played a similarly sterling role on the domestic front. He has played his part to Namibia's conception and subsequent development as a Member of the Constituent

Assembly, as well as the Constitution Drafting Committee, as the first and longest serving Foreign Affairs Minister of our Republic, as Prime Minister, and later also Speaker of the National Assembly. You became Minister of Foreign Affairs when we had the South African Development Coordinating Conference and the Organization of the African Unity. You left the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after we established the Southern African Development Community and the African Union. To you, Comrade Theo-Ben Gurirab, the nation says congratulations!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dr. Gurirab's sterling stewardship and acumen in foreign policy should equally guide us to become cognizant of the new realities of the 21st century, characterized by a rapidly transforming geo-political landscape, wherein the developing world is increasingly becoming an important driver of the world's economy and political agenda.

As I have alluded to during the beginning of my statement, foreign policy is an extension of domestic policy. Therefore, Namibia should seize the opportunity offered by the transforming geo-political landscape to effectively pursue its national interest in building relations and partnerships that allow for trade, value-addition, innovation and increased shared prosperity and development. We should utilize these lecture series to analyze the impact that global issues have on our national development

programmes and on our peace and security.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Given the impact Dr. Gurirab has had at the United Nations, I would like to conclude by making some remarks on the United Nations' Reform, especially the UN Security Council. Since the genesis of the UN Security Council Reform, Namibia has continued to participate actively, both in our national capacity and as a member of the Committee of Ten of the

AU Assembly of Heads of State on the Reform of the UN Security Council. Namibia has remained steadfast in demanding for two permanent seats for African Member States. We do so in the belief that it is unjustified for fifty four countries who represent 1.2 billion of the World's population, to be denied a place among the permanent seats of the UN Security Council. We are convinced that democratization of the UN Security Council will render effective the maintenance of international peace and security. It has been said that, "*If you*

don't have a plan for inclusivity, your plan is to be exclusive." My mantra is that inclusivity spells harmony while exclusivity spells disharmony. Therefore I say, no one must feel excluded from the Namibian House. Equally, no country or continent must feel left out from the Global Village.

Just over a month remains until the commencement of the 72nd General Assembly. Namibia calls on the United Nations to shun exclusivity and embrace inclusivity by working on a plan to make

the UN Security Council more inclusive and reflective of the new geo-political landscape.

With these words, it is now my pleasure to officially launch the “Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab Lecture Series”.