

# **REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY**

**HIS EXCELLENCY DR HAGE G. GEINGOB,**

**PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

**AT THE LAUNCH OF ECHOES AFRICA MAGAZINE**

**AUGUST 12, 2015**

**SAFARI COURT HOTEL**

**WINDHOEK**

**Director of Ceremonies;**

**Honourable Ministers present;**

**Director of the Anti-Corruption Commission – Mr. Paulus Noa;**

**Members of the Diplomatic Corps;**

**Captains of Industry;**

**Members of the Media;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

I am delighted to join you here this morning, to celebrate the launch of Echoes Africa Magazine, and in so doing, talk about one of my favourite subjects, and that subject is AFRICA. Nelson Mandela once said and I quote, *“I dream of an Africa which is in peace with itself.”* Today I will elucidate why we are closer to realizing this dream than we have ever been in our history.

I am reliably informed that the theme for the September/October issue of Echoes Africa Magazine will be aptly titled, *Repositioning Africa to take Charge of the Future*. In my mind there is no doubt that we are experiencing a watershed moment in the history of our continent and entering an era which will be characterized by peace, democracy and prosperity across most if not the entire continent.

Of course, nobody is blind to the fact that there are still a number of challenges to overcome before Africans can prosper, but I am optimistic about the future because of what I am witnessing on the continent. This is why, several years ago I began to talk about *NEW AFRICA*. What is New Africa? It is an Africa characterized by democratic politics, the rule of law and the governance of African matters by Africans, not “masters” from afar.

**Namibia is one of the new children of New Africa. It is a Child of International and Pan Africanist solidarity. During the years of the struggle, the front line states and Nigeria immersed themselves in the struggle against apartheid.**

**These groups of countries played a pivotal role in stifling the Apartheid Regime and helped bring its cruel legacy to an end. Never has the spirit of Pan Africanism had a more profound effect than during the fight against colonial rule.**

**As we enter what we refer to as the second phase of the struggle, we are committed to joining our African brothers and sisters all across the continent to promote intra-African trade as well as value addition which we believe will take our continent to the next level and usher in the era of a New Africa.**

**In the New Africa, we have ensured that the days of Coup d'états have been banished and are incidences of distant memory. There are also no more One Party States.**

**We as Africans, as the African Union (AU), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) amongst others, have ostracised those who come to office through unlawful ways. In New Africa we respect our former Presidents. They live in Africa and are revered and they are not in exile or six feet under or jail.**

**This is the New Africa of Electoral democracy but we have now to bring economic democracy to our people. People do not eat democracy just like they don't eat diamonds, uranium or gold. But as Former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan said, *"Majority of the African countries are now enjoying stable governance. Before you talk about economic growth, political stability***

*is key.”* Therefore electoral democracy is a prerequisite for economic democracy.

Earlier this year, the world witnessed as Namibia commemorated her Silver Jubilee Independence Celebration, an event which coincided with the inauguration and swearing in of Yours Truly as the Third President of the Republic of Namibia to continue the track record and legacy of democratic rule.

Namibia's unblemished track record in governance is well known. We are rated the 6<sup>th</sup> (sixth) best governed African country by the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance; rated 7<sup>th</sup> “clean country” by Transparency International's Corruption index; and ranked as a country with the “freest press in Africa” by Reporters without Borders.

Similarly, our macroeconomic architecture is admirable, underpinned by financial stability evident in our world class banking system (a sector ranked number 25<sup>th</sup> in the world by the World Economic Forum), and well-regulated through a prudent monetary policy for the past 25 years. Global rating agencies such as Fitch and Standard & Poors, have consistently accorded Namibia triple BBB plus ratings which is a testimony that the country enjoys prudent economic management. The stable, peaceful and democratic Namibia we know is not occasioned by either luck or accident. It is the result of deliberate and responsible policy formulation and it is a credit to us as a nation as this is continentally and globally recognized.

Ladies and gentlemen,

While we are heartened by the confidence placed in us by the Namibian people as well as international acclaim, we are resistant of the temptation to become complacent. We understand all too well that we need to be relentless in our efforts to undo the devastating consequences of a deliberate and targeted policy of apartheid which sought to undo the very essence of what it means to be human. 25 years is relatively short in the history of a nation and we have, and continue to, successfully navigate all kinds of landmines and complex twists and turns, which accompany a new nation.

In order to ensure that Namibia continues on a positive trajectory of development and to ensure that I deliver on my responsibility to bring prosperity to the nation, I declared all-out war on poverty during my inauguration speech on March 21, 2015. To demonstrate that this is not mere rhetoric, we have already fired the first salvos in this war.

Firstly, we established the Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare to demonstrate that we are not content with simply reducing poverty, but wiping it and its remnants out completely. This Ministry was therefore created to coordinate, formulate, implement and monitor and evaluate government programmes aimed at poverty eradication.

Secondly, we made an immediate impact before the dust had even settled, by improving the old age pension. The old age pension has played a major role in the prevention of childhood poverty in Namibia. In the absence of an old age pension, the childhood poverty rate would have been ten percent higher than the current figure. That is why one of the first priorities was to increase the old age pension by 66.7 percent from N\$600 per month, to N\$1,000 per month, starting this Financial Year. Further increases will be effected so that old age

**pension grants reach N\$1,200 by 2017. This has already been factored into the national budget.**

**Beyond that, we understand that in order to tackle poverty, one has to employ a multifaceted approach which will involve dealing with issues such as unemployment and the quality of education. Here, let me emphasize the importance of education.**

**Currently, Africa is lagging way behind the rest of the world when it comes to the areas of science and technology.**

**The result of this shortcoming is that we are still heavily reliant on Western Governments and their experts to assist us in these areas. This perpetual dependency on outside assistance has and will continue to be our Achilles Heel unless we take action. The only way out of this situation is for Africans to leap frog towards establishing knowledge driven economies. And the only way to achieve this is through education.**

**In Namibia, Government has realized the key role education will play in our war against poverty as well as in our drive towards economic emancipation. This is why we have created two Ministries in the area of Education, namely the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture and the Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Innovation. It should be noted that both these two Ministries are headed by two qualified female Ministers. We have also appointed the first female Prime Minister and also have a female Deputy Prime Minister. Today, most of the key Ministries in Namibia are headed by women, based on their qualifications and expertise. Therefore there is no tokenism in our approach to gender equality.**

**Furthermore, in order to deal with the issue of unemployment, we have renamed the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation in order to broaden its scope.**

All across the continent we are witnessing progressive policy reforms and the drive towards industrialization. Whether it is in SADC, COMESA, ECOWAS or elsewhere, we are witnessing a drive towards a better future. This is a future in which Africans can control their own destinies, politically, economically and socially.

Ladies and gentlemen,

If we are to realize the era of African prosperity, then one thing we need to ensure as Africans is the ownership and management of our own natural resources. Because of natural resources, the continent is rich, but Africans are poor. Millions of Africans are living in abject poverty. Why is it like this?

The answer lies in the manner in which Africa sells and exports her natural resources. Africa is in extreme poverty largely because it exports its vast natural resources – mainly minerals – in raw form cheaply, and re-imports finished products made from these at high cost.

As expressed by the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), Carlos Lopes, *“This reality challenges us, as Africans, to think creatively. The abundant natural resources that we have in Africa should be utilised to the fullest.”*

This is the only way to go for Africa’s economic transformation and can only be done through collective action.

Ladies and gentlemen,

While I have briefly outlined the strategies that Namibia and Africa at large are employing to take charge of the future and the challenges we face in doing so, I would also like to touch on another important topic. Since we are here to launch a media publication, I cannot leave this arena without talking about the media and it's the crucial role it plays in portraying the image of Africa. Since the days of the struggle against colonialism, the media, known as the 4<sup>th</sup> Estate has been pivotal in bringing about change in Africa.

One passage that sums up the role played by journalists in Africa against colonial rule is captured by authors Peter Golding and Phillip Elliot who described journalists in Nigeria as created by anti-colonial protest, baptized in the water of colonialist propaganda and nurtured in Parliamentary democracy.

Journalists such as Nnamdi Azikiwe from Nigeria, exemplify the spirit of defiance and commitment to the truth that helped sway public opinion against colonialism and embolden the masses to rise up and fight for their freedom.

I therefore call on the press to continue in the same vein as we commence the second phase of the struggle which is that of economic independence. Let us not live in the past but rather follow in the footsteps of the pioneering journalist of yesterday by publishing positive stories about Africa - stories which will motivate our people, most notably our youth so that they pursue the dream of economic democracy.

I am aware that publications and media outlets need to make money and unfortunately good news is not profitable. There are few positive stories but positive stories do not sell newspapers. If things work well like in Namibia, there will be no reports in the newspapers. This is why one will hardly hear any news about Namibia in the USA, Europe or South Africa. Therefore I say that no news is good news. However these days our media is open and publishing as well as broadcasting some of the poor conditions our people are living in which draws our attention so that we can assist these people. But here I would like to call for a balanced approach. The media must also showcase some of the positive developments in the country.

Often times this situation leads to pessimistic reporting about Africa. I know that it is said that a pessimist is a well-informed optimist but I am an eternally Afro-optimist who is optimistic about Africa and her future.

I therefore hope that this launch of Echoes Africa Magazine will open the gateway to a new era of accurate, informed and unbiased reporting on issues related to our beautiful continent. I am aware that this publication has been established with the primary objective of telling the African story; African stories told by Africans themselves and not as presented by the western media. Echoes Africa magazine is designed to be the voice of the African continent in an attempt to take charge of our image as Africans.

I am delighted by the fact that the magazine is widely circulated across the United States, Canada and West Africa. I am certain that the magazine will continue to increase its circulation, and in so doing, transmit the message of the true African story to the rest of the world, thereby helping erase the negative perceptions of the continent which has been put in the minds of people by the international media.

Ladies and gentlemen,

When I say that Africa is on the march, it is not a political statement but rather a belief held by many progressive Africans from all walks of life, from young to old, from east to west and from Cape to Cairo. New Africa has arrived. This is an Africa which does not believe in the blame game, an Africa which takes blame if there is corruption and looting of her resources. It is an Africa whose people say that we are our own developers and we will fight against corruption, nepotism, racism or tribalism and we fight for ONE AFRICA, ONE CONTINENT.

With these words I would like to wish Echoes Africa Magazine a resounding success.

I thank you.