



*CHECK AGAINST  
DELIVERY*

**2017 OPENING STATEMENT  
BY HON. MARGARET MENSAH-WILLIAMS, MP  
CHAIRPERSON OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL**

**15 FEBRUARY 2017**

**HONOURABLE BERNARD SONGA SIBALATANI, VICE-CHAIRPERSON  
OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL;**

**HONOURABLE LEBBIUS TOBIAS, CHIEF WHIP OF THE RULING  
PARTY IN THE NATIONAL COUNCIL;**

**HONOURABLES CHIEF WHIPS OF THE OPPOSITION IN THE  
NATIONAL COUNCIL;**

**HONOURABLE HILMA NICANOR, DEPUTY MINISTER OF VETERANS  
AFFAIRS & MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL;**

**HONOURABLE MEMBERS;**

**MRS. EMILIA MKUSA, SECRETARY TO THE NATIONAL COUNCIL;**

**MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES;**

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.**

It is with God`s Grace that I bid you all, Honourable Members, a cordial welcome back to this august House for the first time in this calendar year, 2017. I hope that you have spent the much needed quality time with your loved ones, even though our work as councilors never ceases, I am nevertheless hopeful that you have rested well and ready once again to build upon the momentum this house gained in 2016.

I would like to inform the house that we are missing two members who unfortunately are not well enough to join us. Please join me in wishing them both the quickest of recoveries.

**HONOURABLE MEMBERS,**

We are back in business, and this year we have a mammoth task ahead of us. His Excellency, the President has themed 2017 as the year of rededication.

Therefore, Honourable Members, this is a call for each and every one of us to rededicate ourselves to our responsibility of upholding and defending the laws and the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia. The electorate expects us to continue holding the executive accountable and to perform our oversight function to ensure that the will of the people prevails.

Mother Theresa once said; **I quote:** *"Even if you're on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there."* **end of quote.** Therefore, we must keep moving, we must commit ourselves to continuously improve and execute our mandate more effectively and aim for efficiency.

**HONOURABLE MEMBERS,**

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

The 5<sup>th</sup> National Council has been characterized by the ethos "**business unusual**". Indeed, over the past year or so, we have attained some notable achievements. Please allow me to highlight some of those milestones that together as Team National Council has achieved:

1. We successfully hosted the first ever Constituency Week in all the 14 Regions;
2. The Office of the Chairperson conducted a successful outreach programme to all 14 regions under the theme “Enhancing public participation in the law making process”;
3. All the 14 regional council reports were tabled, debated and adopted by the House;
4. The National Council rejected the Principle of the Citizenship Amendment Bill;
5. The two Houses of Parliament co-hosted the CEDAW Seminar;
6. The spouses of all the members underwent protocol training;
7. Various standing committees visited the regions to carry out their oversight functions;
8. Last but not least, I am pleased to announce the successful formation of the Junior National Council. All the 14 regions have submitted to my Office the three names of their representatives. This is a very important milestone geared towards achieving National Council’s strategic goal of “Enhancing public participation in the law-making process”, in this case specifically targeting the school going youth. Tomorrow, I will announce the names of all the 42 Honourable junior members in this August House.

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

These are but a few of our achievements as the House of Review. There is honestly nothing more to say but to proudly say WELL DONE to you Honourable Members; let us continue working in the spirit of Harambee by pulling in the same direction as we fulfill our mandate as stipulated in the Supreme Law of the land.

In 2017, we have set the bar even higher for ourselves. We have made the tabling of the Constituency Development Bill in the National Assembly a top priority; and consultations in this regard with the Right Honourable Prime Minister are right now at an advanced stage.

Last year we engaged the youth by way of educational theatre and it proved to be a very effective tool. Therefore, this year we plan to build on this success and utilize this tool once more to engage even more young people across the width and breadth of our country.

National Council this year will continue to consult and work closely with civil society, traditional authorities, religious institutions and the private sector among others, as part of our stakeholder engagement strategy aimed at enhancing the public's participation in the law-making process.

**HONOURABLE MEMBERS,**

Yesterday we all witnessed the Official Opening of Parliament by the Head of State under the theme **“Parliament working towards the Attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”**.

Namibia is a signatory of the 2030 Agenda which includes the 17 Sustainable Development Goals aimed at ending poverty, fighting inequality and injustice, and tackling climate change by 2030.

Parliament, National Council in particular, has a critical and unique role to play if Namibia is to meet and exceed the SDGs. This unique role is rooted in our work at the grassroots level and in the rural and remote areas where the majority of the SDGs are targeted.

### **HONOURABLE MEMBERS, moving on...**

The business of the Day is for the House to consider the Report of the Select Committee on the Public Private Partnership Bill.

In our last session, the House referred this Bill to a Select Committee for public consultations to seek further input from stakeholders. This process was recently concluded and, therefore, the Select Committee will table its Report for further consideration by the House. I would like to thank the Chairperson of the Committee Hon. Lebbius Tobias and his team for their hard work during the consultations and I hope all findings and recommendations from the citizens are incorporated, which I have no doubt that this has happened.

I, therefore, urge you Honourable Members to make your valuable contributions towards this important Report.

I wish you all fruitful deliberations ahead!

**I THANK YOU**