



REMARKS BY

HONOURABLE PROF. PETER H. KATJAVIVI, MP

SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

AT THE

**OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 5th SESSION OF
THE 6th PARLIAMENT**

TUESDAY, 14 FEBRUARY 2017

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CHAMBER
PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS
WINDHOEK**

Check Against Delivery

- **Hon. Margret Mensah-Williams, Chairperson of the National Council and Mr Williams;**
- **Hon. Members of Parliament including the visiting UK Parliamentarians;**
- **His Lordship Peter Shivute, Chief Justice;**
- **His Lordship Petrus Damaseb, Deputy Chief Justice, Hon. Judges and other Members of the Judiciary;**
- **Hon. Laura McLeod-Katjirua, Governor of the Khomas Region;**
- **Hon. Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Former Speaker of the National Assembly and Mrs. Guriras;**
- **Hon. Asser Kapere, Former Chairperson of the National Council and Mrs. Kapere;**
- **Mr. Junias Kandjeke, Auditor-General;**
- **Your Worship Mr. Muesee Kazapua, Mayor of the City of Windhoek;**
- **Mr. Ipumbu Wendelinus Shiimi, Governor of the Bank of Namibia;**
- **Your Excellences, Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;**
- **Distinguished Service Chiefs;**
- **Mrs. Rosemary Jane Katjavivi, my dear wife;**
- **Eminent Invited Guests;**
- **Fellow Namibians;**
- **Media Practitioners;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of Members of both Houses of Parliament, the Chairperson of the National Council and myself, I would like to welcome you all to this joint session of the Official Opening of Parliament, 2017.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank Honourable Loide Kasingo, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly and Hon. Bernhard Sibalatani, Vice-Chairperson of the National Council, for presiding over the first phase of the proceedings of this opening of Parliament 2017.

Your Excellency,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a Constitutional requirement that each year at the opening of Parliament, the three organs of the State; The Executive, Legislature and Judiciary, are jointly in attendance. Equally, in terms of Rule 15(d) of the Standing Rules and Orders of the National Assembly, the President of the Republic, delivers an Opening Address to the Joint Session of Parliament. True to the democratic values that are ingrained in our parliamentary system, we are gathered here today, to re-affirm that long-standing tradition.

Even as a young nation, Namibia has built a solid democracy exemplified across the continent. Last week, the three Organs of the State jointly partook in the official opening of the Namibia's Legal Year 2017. This close collaboration between the three Organs of the State is important in order for us to overcome the current economic constraints in the nation and the region, in the spirit of Harambee! We are in one Namibian house and therefore, the leadership of the country should come together more often, to take stock of developments, so that we can brainstorm on strategies that will meet the aspirations of our people.

Your Excellency,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Article 63 (1) of the Constitution states that: *The National Assembly, as the principal legislative authority in and over Namibia, shall have the power, subject to this Constitution, to make and repeal laws for the peace and good government of the country in the best interest of the people of Namibia.* These functions are, *ipso facto*, also extended to the National Council under Articles 74 and 75 of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia. These Constitutional provisions include the oversight function of the two Houses of Parliament, which is an inherent and very important dimension of our democracy. This is the hallmark of the foundation for transparency and accountability in a living democracy such as practised in Namibia.

Your Excellency,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There are three things I would like to highlight during this official opening:

- Firstly, the chosen theme;
- Secondly, why the event is taking place in the Chamber despite the inadequate sitting space.

The theme of this Fifth Session of the Sixth Parliament is, “**Parliament Working Towards the Attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**”.

Our Parliament is part of the global network of Parliaments who are committed to ensure the successful achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As a Speaker, I was one of those who attended the IPU Conference in New York in 2015 where Speakers of IPU Member Parliaments dedicated themselves to the attainment of SDGs. The sustainability of mankind can be summarised in the 17 SDGs and a nation that can successfully achieve these will have had to commit itself to the well-being of its people. Most countries did not meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and they have taken a step back to examine where things could have gone wrong. One key element has been that Parliaments which are the voice of the people did not play an active role in the campaign to achieve MDGs. So we have taken stock and we do not intend to repeat the same mistake with the SDGs.

On the aspect of service delivery; Parliament will continue to work closely with our Government. The Parliament has an obligation to encourage the Government to ensure that the programmes and projects that are initiated correspond to the actual needs of our people. Furthermore, we must ensure through our oversight mandate that the implementation of such programmes is aligned to the intended objectives stipulated in national development plans and policies, including the Harambee Prosperity Plan.

As a Parliament, we are ready to partner with our Government and national institutions to ensure that Namibia excels in this regard.

Your Excellency,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Some of you may wonder why we are hosting this event in the Chamber, where the space is insufficient.

As you are all aware, the nation is undergoing financial constraints and therefore we decided to avoid the expenditure of hiring a tent to hold the event in the gardens. Furthermore, given the rainy season, it is probably a wiser decision to host the event inside a more secure building even if it means squeezing close to each other for a few hours.

Your Excellency,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite the financial constraints in the country, a review of 2016 clearly demonstrates that our Parliament did a great job and we were able to achieve a lot with limited resources. With the cooperation of our Government, we were able to achieve a lot of tasks through the commitment of our Parliamentarians and staff of Parliament, in conjunction with the support of our development partners.

2017 presents itself as a year where Parliament needs to deepen its engagement with civil society in all aspects relating to SDGs. Parliament is planning to do this with the relevant stakeholders through the most appropriate pathways.

In equal measure, we need to continue to strengthen our institutions of governance and the sense of patriotism, in the spirit of *Harambee* – togetherness – as guided by the President’s initiated Harambee Prosperity Plan. This is essential so as to build a resilient society. The strengthening of our institutions will enable us specifically as the three Organs of the State and collectively as a nation, to bring services closer to the people and ensure their timely delivery. This is essential so as to build a resilient society.

We are confident that with a sense of rededication, we shall weather the storm of the current challenges and continue to undertake the required reforms. History has proven time and again, that it is at the time like this when the economy is confronted with challenges such as the one our Nation is going through, that best outcomes and sustainable reforms are attained.

Your Excellency,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the spirit of innovative cooperation, we have been joined by a delegation of good friends from the UK Parliament, under the auspices of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) UK Chapter. They are here to conduct a capacity building training programme with us. These Members of Parliament are drawn from both Houses of the British Parliament, under the leadership of Rt. Hon. Baroness Blackstone.

I extend a warm welcome to you, our dear guests!

Your Excellency,

On behalf of the House as a whole and on my own behalf, I have the pleasure and honour to congratulate you, Mr. President and Mrs. Monica Geingos, our First Lady, on this special day, which is your wedding anniversary. We offer you our warmest congratulations and wish you both good health and all the best.

I now have the honour and distinct pleasure to invite you, Your Excellency, Dr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, to deliver your address for the official opening of the Parliament.

Your Excellency, Mr. President, you now have the floor to address the House!