

Hon. Speaker,

Hon. Members,

Before I commence with my intervention on the subject before the House, permit me to extend warmest congratulation to His Excellency, President Hifikepunye Pohamba for having been honoured by the Mo Ibrahim Foundation that awarded him with the 2014 Prize for Good Governance in Africa.

It is indeed a well-deserved honour upon our president and off-course the country.



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Hon. Prof. Peter H. Katjavivi, MP's Intervention in National Assembly, on Returnees of Namibian Origin from Botswana

3rd February 2015

Hon. Speaker,

Hon. Members,

Returnees of Namibian Origin from Botswana

I welcome the opportunity of making a contribution to the motion presented by Hon. Kazenambo Kazenambo, in relation to the descendants of the Namibian people who fled to Botswana during the war of 1904-8 resistance against German colonialism.

I would like to speak briefly about how their forefathers were received when they fled to Botswana.

We are told that they were well-received both by the British as well as the local Batswana Chiefs, in particular, Chief Khama and Chief Sekgoma Letsholathebe. We also learned that both Letsholathebe and Chief Samuel Maharero had enjoyed a good personal relationship. This relationship stems from a 'treaty of friendship' that existed in the past, dating back to 1850s. It is that treaty of friendship that contributed to the harmonious co-existence between the between the guests and their hosts including their community leaders. It is this fact that enabled the guests to retain their identity, language, culture and customs.

Last week, both Hon. Kazenambo and Hon. Amathila spoke at length about the contribution made by those Namibians who fled to Botswana and how they continued to participate in the freedom struggle for the independence of Namibia.

The Namibia exile community in Botswana also took active part against the South African attempt to incorporate Namibia to South Africa as a fifth province in the 1940s. In this way, our people were mobilised on both sides of the border. Naturally, all our people, whether those at home or in the diaspora as refugees in Botswana were concerned about being further enslaved by the South African regime.

Furthermore, this attempt generated a lot of worldwide opposition and condemnation, involving not only Namibians but also leaders in Botswana and South Africa. In particular, Tshekedi Khama played a crucial role in this regard. He was able to liaise with an Anglican Clergy, Rev. Michael Scott, who worked very closely with leaders of the Namibian exiles in Botswana as well as within Namibia, in particular, Chief Hosea Kutako.

This enabled Chief Hosea Kutako to petition the United Nations in the 1940s on the basis of the facts that had been provided by all stakeholders and key

players. A couple of other eminent Namibians, for instance Professor Mburumba Kerina, Advocate Jariretundu Kozonguizi and Dr. Sam Nujoma, the Founding Father of the Namibian Nation, amongst others, later also joined the team that petitioned the United Nations in this regard, in the 1960s.

Likewise, the leadership of the African National congress (ANC) of South Africa joined in this campaign, to reject the South African supremacist government's claims over Namibia. As a result of all this, the United Nations General Assembly rejected South Africa's request to incorporate Namibia. The voting was 37 votes to 0, with 9 abstentions.

The point about all this is the observance of critical cooperation for the struggle of independence of Namibia, which developed at an early stage, amongst all of our people – those inside and outside Namibia.

Hon. Speaker,

Hon. Members,

May I take digress by sharing with this Honourable House that I had suggested to the former Mayor of the City of Windhoek during her term of office then, as a gesture of goodwill, that we honour Tshekedi Khama by renaming one of our major streets either in Windhoek after him. It is my opinion that if we fail to do it in Windhoek, probably we should do it in Gobabis since it is closer to Botswana. In this way, we could have honoured this great son of Africa.

Hon. Speaker,

Hon. Members,

Let me now turn to specific issues raised by Hon. Kazenambo in his motion.

These are Namibian returnees from Botswana, the descendants of Namibians who were displaced during the 1904-8 war. Naturally, all of us would like them to return to the country of their ancestors.

However, if there are issues that need to be addressed so that they can be received in a manner befitting their status, as citizens of Namibia by descent. These issues should be amicably handled. That is the spirit that prevailed at the time of independence and still prevails to this day.

On the issue of National documents, obviously one is aware that there have been various concerns raised by several people lacking relevant National documents. But this has been cutting across the board and it is up to the Ministry of Home Affairs to address this challenge. We are hopeful that the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration has taken note of Hon. Kazenambo's concern in this regard.

On the issue of Namibian returnees from Botswana, I am aware that this is an issue that requires a great deal of planning and coordination between the Government of Namibia and the Government of Botswana.

I am aware that there are people planning to return in the near future, led by among others, an old comrade of mine, Mr. Justice Muinjo. Mr. Muinjo is one of our long-standing SWAPO party members in Botswana. He accompanied me at the time when I was assigned to Botswana by SWAPO, to notify the family of one of our Commanders, who had fallen in battle, the Late Cde. Hanganee Kavezeri.

Mr. Muinjo and many of his colleagues are planning to return to the land of their ancestors. For many of them, this is a dream that they hope will one day become a reality.

Hon. Speaker,

Hon. Members,

Therefore, I support the Motion.

I thank you!