



**MAIDEN SPEECH BY HONORABLE LINUS MUCHILA
WEDNESDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER 2024.**

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members,

I stand before you today with immense gratitude and a profound sense of responsibility. To the ranks and files of the All People's Party (APP), our dedicated members, supporters, and voters, thank you for the trust and opportunity you have bestowed upon me as the fifth Member of Parliament of our party. Together, we are committed to forging a better, more equitable Namibia.

Our campaign theme, **“Narrowing the gap between the rich and poor,”** is not just a slogan; it’s a guiding vision. We are committed to ensuring that the wealth and resources of our nation are shared fairly among all Namibians, without discrimination. Today, I wish to address the critical issues of **youth unemployment, poverty, underdevelopment,** and propose concrete solutions that will drive Namibia forward.

Youth Unemployment: Investing in Emerging Industries

Namibia's youth unemployment rate currently stands at **46.1%**, leaving many of our young people without hope or opportunity. This is an urgent issue, and if we are to avoid a future of wasted potential, we must act decisively.

Our plan focuses on **diversifying economic sectors** to create job opportunities, particularly in tourism, agriculture, and renewable energy. These sectors hold great promise for growth and sustainability. We will also invest in **vocational training and entrepreneurship programs**, equipping young Namibians with the skills needed for these industries. By fostering innovation and enterprise, we can generate sustainable employment and promote economic growth.

Poverty Alleviation: Strengthening Social Safety Nets

Despite our nation's rich resources, poverty still affects **43%** of Namibians. To effectively combat this, we must improve access to quality education, healthcare, and affordable housing. Our approach is not just about redistributing wealth, but about creating opportunities for all to thrive.

One key initiative is the **Basic Income Grant (BIG)**, aligned with **Article 95(j)** of the Namibian Constitution, which mandates the enactment of legislation to ensure that the unemployed, incapacitated, indigent, and disadvantaged receive social benefits. The APP recommends the **implementation of the BIG**, targeting unemployed Namibians between the ages of 21 and 59. This grant will provide a stable income for those in desperate need, fostering economic stability, promoting social cohesion, and ensuring that no Namibian is left behind.

Regional Underdevelopment: Building Inclusive Infrastructure

Many regions, particularly the rural areas of the two Kavango regions and Zambezi region, continue to suffer from **chronic underdevelopment**. This exacerbates inequalities and leaves these communities disconnected from national progress.

To address this, we must prioritize **infrastructure development** - building roads, improving access to clean water, and enhancing educational and healthcare facilities in these regions. **Inclusive development** means no region should be left behind, and every community should benefit from the nation's prosperity.

Housing Crisis: Delivering on Promises

Honourable Members, housing is a fundamental human right. Too many Namibians live in inadequate, unsafe conditions. The promise of **free housing**, made decades ago, remains unfulfilled.

We must confront this reality and accelerate efforts to deliver **affordable housing** for all. By investing in both urban and rural housing projects, we can ensure that Namibians have access to safe, dignified living conditions. This is not just about fulfilling a promise; it's about restoring dignity to our people.

Reforming the Pension System: Justice for the Elderly

Our elderly citizens, who have contributed significantly to the growth of this nation, deserve to live their retirement years with dignity. **Article 95(f)** of the Constitution guarantees that senior citizens are entitled to regular pensions sufficient to maintain a decent standard of living and access social and cultural opportunities.

However, we know that many pensioners, especially those relying solely on the **government pension grant**, struggle to meet their basic needs. The APP recommends a **blanket VAT exemption** on essential goods purchased by all pensioners, ensuring that even the most vulnerable elderly citizens do not have to bear the burden of indirect taxation. While those who retired from formal employment may have accumulated savings and received tax benefits during their working years, they were also taxed upon retirement, often at higher rates than during employment. It is only just that they no longer contribute to the economy in this way, given their contributions throughout their lives.

This policy will help alleviate the financial strain on our senior citizens, allowing them to live with dignity, financial security, and greater ease in their later years.

Security Guards: Addressing Exploitation and Ensuring Fair Wages

Security guards, the unsung heroes of our communities, are often underpaid and overworked. **Article 95(i)** of the Constitution mandates that workers are paid a living wage adequate for maintaining a decent standard of living and access to social and cultural opportunities.

The APP recommends the **immediate cessation of outsourcing security services** to private companies. By integrating security guards into mainstream employment under the special field force service, we can ensure they receive **fair wages**, healthcare, and retirement benefits. This step will break the cycle of exploitation and allow these essential workers to maintain a dignified standard of living.

Amendment to the Traditional Authority Act: Protecting Land Rights

Honourable Members, the issue of **communal land ownership** is of great importance to our nation. **Article 100** of the Namibian Constitution states that land, water, and natural resources belong to the State unless lawfully owned otherwise. However, communal and ancestral lands are historically and lawfully under the custodianship of traditional leaders.

The APP advocates for a **referendum** or an **amendment of both the Communal Land Act and the Traditional Authority Act** to recognize the lawful ownership and management of these lands by traditional leaders. This amendment will safeguard our cultural heritage and ensure that these lands continue to serve the people, reflecting both the legal and moral framework of ownership that has sustained communities for generations.

National Reconciliation Policy: A Path to Unity and Healing

Our **National Reconciliation Policy** must become more than just a document—it must be a living, dynamic tool for fostering genuine unity and healing. We need **community engagement** and **transparency** to address past grievances and promote social cohesion.

We can learn from neighboring countries like **South Africa** and **Angola**, who have implemented reconciliation processes that we can adapt to our context. Namibia has the opportunity to lead by example, promoting equity and justice in our reconciliation efforts.

Food Security: Ensuring a Sustainable Future

Food security is fundamental to reducing poverty and unemployment. As per **Article 95(j)** of the Namibian Constitution, it is the government's duty to plan and maintain an acceptable level of nutrition and improve public health.

The APP recommends **consistent planning and investment** in large-scale agricultural projects in regions with water resources, such as **Zambezi, Kavangos, and Kunene**. These projects will boost local economies, create jobs, and reduce Namibia's dependence on imported food. Ensuring that all Namibians have access to nutritious food is critical for public health and raising the standard of living.

Conclusion: A Call to Action

Honourable Members, the gap between the rich and poor in our nation is widening. It is our moral duty to close this gap. We must hold ourselves accountable for delivering on the promises made to our people. **Narrowing the gap** is not just an economic necessity; it is a matter of **justice**.

I urge each of you to join me in this mission. Let us work together, across party lines, to build a **more equitable** and **prosperous future** for all Namibians. Our people deserve nothing less.

Thank you.

Honorable Speaker, Honorable Members.