



**GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

---

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, INNOVATION, YOUTH  
SPORTS, ARTS AND CULTURE (MEIYSAC)**

**MAIDEN SPEECH BY  
SANET L. STEENKAMP, MP & MINISTER**

---

Windhoek April, 15th 2025

- **Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly,**
- **Esteemed Honourable Members,**

It is with deep gratitude and humility that I rise in this August House. Coming from humble beginnings, I thank our Heavenly Father for the gift of life and pray for renewed strength as I begin this new chapter in service to our nation.

Namibia stands at a powerful moment in history, with women holding the three highest political positions—President, Vice President, and Speaker of the National Assembly. This is a profound reflection of women reclaiming their voices and leadership in spaces once dominated by men.

Leadership in Namibia through the Lens of "Women Who Run with the Wolves:" the archetypes and wisdom in Clarissa Pinkola Estés' influential book.

I sincerely thank Her Excellency, Dr. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, for entrusting me with this honour. As Namibia's first female President, she embodies the spirit of *La Loba*—the Wolf Woman described by Clarissa Pinkola Estés—who brings wisdom, renewal, and intuitive leadership. She leads with both heart and vision, drawing from the country's past to shape a more just and inclusive future. Her leadership breathes life into policy, uplifts the forgotten, and restores the soul of our nation.

She is a true patron of the creative, the spiritual, the athletic, and the curious—an inspiration to every Namibian who dreams of a better tomorrow.

### **Hon. Speaker**

I also wish to congratulate our Vice President, Her Excellency Ms. Lucia Witbooi. She reminds me of *The Handless Maiden* from

*Women Who Run with the Wolves*—a symbol of resilience and the powerful journey of reclaiming one's strength after facing deep challenges. Her rise to leadership is an inspiration to many, showing what is possible despite societal limitations. With her quiet strength and steady determination, I have no doubt she will navigate complex political challenges with grace and persistence. She has our full support.

Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly, Dr. Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila—your leadership reminds me of the Crescent Moon Bear, symbolizing the courage to confront difficult truths and the strength to guide us through honest and often challenging political discourse. As you uphold the integrity of this House and facilitate healing through proper process and procedure, please know that you have our full support. Congratulations on your appointment.

I also extend my congratulations to our Right Honourable Prime Minister, Dr. Eliah Ngurare—a man of deep vision and empathy, who truly sees people with his soul.

## **Hon Speaker**

## **Honourable Members**

Today, I wish to honour those who shaped me: my late mother Maria Cloete, my grandfather Max Cloete, and my aunt Ella Brown. My mother, a domestic worker later appointed hostel cook, carried what I call "*bone wisdom*"—a deep, intuitive knowledge born of struggle, not schooling. She sacrificed everything to give us a chance at education, believing that learning was the medicine for generational healing. Though she lacked material resources, she never wavered in

dignity or purpose. Her strength, her quiet rebellion against limitation, and her fierce belief in my potential form the foundation of my leadership today.

My position in government is not a departure from her life's work—it is the continuation of it. Her hands, once cleaning the homes of others, cleared the path I now walk in government. She ran with invisible wolves, howling silently so I could one day speak boldly. I carry her legacy with me, bringing her wisdom into spaces she never entered but always belonged.

When my mother passed away while I was still young, my siblings—Nannie Ellen, Brenda, Pieter, and Mike—stepped in with care and protection that shaped who I am today. In doing so, they showed what Estes calls "*the loyalty that transcends circumstance*," helping me through a difficult transition and making it possible for my education and future to take root. I salute and thank them for their sacrifices.

**I also honour the love and support of my husband, Willy and children, Janine, Byron, Gunton and Eunice.**

This appointment is not mine alone; it is a shared honour that belongs to all of us. I carry their sacrifices, strength, and wisdom into every policy decision and act of service. My journey—from a child who lost her mother, supported by siblings, my Aunty Lilly, and my Uncle Thomas, to a student and now a public servant—is proof that, like a wolf pack, we adapt and carry on, even through profound loss and struggles.

To my mentors and former colleagues who have supported me in my career, thank you. As I enter this new chapter, I do so with hope, commitment, and belief in a better future for every Namibian, especially our youth and children. I look forward to a journey of mutual respect in this August House as we work to uplift our nation.

Honourable Speaker,

Allow me to introduce myself: I am Sanet Lentrud Steenkamp, born in Karasburg, into the Cloete Family, in the south of our beautiful country. I know what it means to be denied entry to a whites-only library, to long for access to a pool we were once excluded from. I also know what it means to be young, pregnant, and unemployed—and how that led me to begin my teaching journey at Lordsville Secondary School, Karasburg, as an unqualified but determined teacher.

Though born in the south, the people of Oshana and Ohangwena also claim me as their own, having lived and worked there for 18 years of my professional life. I am a proud Namibian.

**Hon speaker**

**Hon Members,**

The visionary move by Her Excellency the President offers us unique opportunities to leverage and optimise our country's human resources. The scope of the newly formed Ministry of Education, Innovation, Youth, Sports, Arts and Culture is multifaceted and intertwined, with the potential for a significant multiplier effect across all sectors of the Namibian landscape.

I enter this new charter in my life with eagerness, hope, anticipation and belief that, better days still lies ahead for every Namibian, especially our youth and school children. I stand here in anticipation of a journey of mutual respect in our deliberations in this August

House, all directed towards uplifting our great country, Namibia, and its people.

Allow me to acknowledge and sincerely thank Honourable Ester Anna Nghipondoka, Honourable Itah Kandji-Murangi, and Honourable Agnes Tjongarero for their pivotal leadership in guiding their respective Ministries to where they are today. Their dedication laid the solid foundation upon which my Deputy Minister, our team, and I are now building. I recognize the immense responsibility entrusted to me and assure you, and the nation at large, of my commitment to lead with integrity, hard work, and compassion. I am driven by deep empathy for human suffering and the courage to confront its root causes across our schools, institutions of higher learning, and sports fields.

I pledge to support policies that tackle underlying issues rather than symptoms, prioritizing human rights and long-term national well-being over short-term political gains. I will speak truthfully and decisively in Parliament, framing compassionate policies through the lens of strength and resilience. I believe in humanizing data through personal stories, fostering departmental cultures that balance results with relationships, and holding both myself and stakeholders accountable. Transparent communication and decisive, at times uncomfortable, decisions are essential to real progress.

I will relentlessly advocate for funding that protects vulnerable populations while opposing wasteful spending, even if it means challenging powerful interests. Like our President, I am committed to defending our natural resources, understanding ecological health as non-negotiable. The ongoing crisis of Gender-Based Violence must be addressed not just with sympathy, but with systemic reforms that shift power dynamics in our communities. We must never forget the tragic case of five-year-old Ingrid Maasdorp—her suffering is a

stark reminder of the urgent need for justice and protection for all children.

Finally, I will confront corruption head-on, recognizing it as a threat to the wellbeing of our citizens and the integrity of our institutions. I remain unwavering in my determination to uphold accountability, transparency, and justice in every facet of our work.

### **Hon Speaker**

### **Hon Members,**

The Ministry of Education, Innovation, Sport, Arts and Culture contributes to four of the seven Swapo Manifesto Implementation Plan priorities—Sports, Youth Empowerment, Quality Education and Training, and Creative Industries. Despite ongoing challenges such as inadequate sports infrastructure, underfunded leagues, overworked teachers, poor school discipline, low academic performance, fragmented youth programs, and outdated facilities, the Ministry is driving reform through ten levers of change. Central to this is the “Project Charter,” a detailed roadmap for improving all education sectors, including Early Childhood Education. Our guiding motto, “Foundation first, excellence always,” reflects our belief that strong foundations lead to better outcomes for learners and society. We are particularly enthusiastic about the Teaching Profession Draft Bill, developed through extensive consultation, which aims to professionalize and standardize teaching, lecturing, and vocational training across the board.

We need a strategic shift that positions arts, culture, and heritage as vital drivers of economic development, not just as cultural luxuries. Institutions of higher learning must become active players in the creative economy by integrating heritage across disciplines, encouraging collaboration between arts and business faculties, and treating creative expression as a source of sustainable livelihoods.

This includes establishing Creative Hubs in universities, schools, and communities that offer training in business, marketing, financial literacy, and intellectual property. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is essential to value the informal knowledge of tour guides, indigenous experts, and artisans by providing accredited pathways to formal qualifications. Through applied research, curriculum integration, and policy support, we can develop heritage-based entrepreneurship that promotes self-employment, community income, and youth empowerment. This calls for coordinated efforts between government, educational institutions, and the private sector to build capacity, fund innovation, and embed cultural entrepreneurship into national strategies.

I am excited to serve and empower the youth through targeted initiatives outlined in our upcoming Integrated Strategic Plan (2025/2026–2030/2031). Through the Directorate of Youth Development, we are committed to fostering entrepreneurship, expanding access to business support, and promoting youth health and well-being, including comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services. Programs like the National Youth Fund will provide funding, mentorship, and coaching, while youth agricultural cooperatives will offer sustainable economic opportunities. We are also enhancing youth employability by partnering with training institutions and employers. On the sports front, our Directorate of Sport is focused on advancing national sports development. Despite challenges, our rugby and cricket teams have excelled internationally, inspiring us to reach even greater heights. As we prepare to host the 2025 AUSC Youth Games in Windhoek, we aim for inclusive, cost-effective games that emphasize diversity, excellence, and innovation. To support these efforts, we've launched the Accelerated Infrastructure Development Plan (AIDeP) to improve school facilities and reduce overcrowding, and we're moving forward with the renovation of the Independence Stadium, with construction set to begin in 2025/2026. Guided by the SWAPO



Manifesto, our vision is to create a nation where youth are empowered, education and innovation thrive, sports and culture are celebrated, and every Namibian has access to opportunity.

- **Honourable Speaker,**
- **Esteemed Honourable Members,**

My aim today was simply to introduce myself and share a brief overview of what lies ahead for MEYSAC as we embark on this journey of unified mandates. While I recognize the need for increased funding to boost research and drive innovation in key areas like energy, AI, robotics, oil and gas, and maritime studies, I fully support the National Budget. I commend the Minister of Finance, Hon. Ericah Shafudah, for her skillful and balanced approach in delivering an inclusive and timely budget.

**I thank you all for your kind attention...!**

---