

MAIDEN SPEECH BY HONOURABLE WILLEM AMUTENYA, MP,

15 APRIL 2025

The 8th Parliament of Hope and Conviction

Honourable Speaker,

Honourable Members,

I rise in accordance with Rule 91 of the Standing Rules, Orders and Internal Arrangements of the National Assembly, which mandates that a member elected to this August House for the first time must deliver a maiden speech before participating in any debate.

Allow me, therefore, to introduce myself to this esteemed Assembly, which I regard as the Parliament of Hope and Conviction, and, through you, to the entire Namibian nation.

Honourable Speaker,

Honourable Members;

The Namibian people;

My name is Willem Amutenya, a born child of the liberation struggle, born in Lubango, Angola, and hailing from Iihongo Village in the Oshikoto

Region. I am a product of student politics, groomed by the University of Namibia where I pursued my Honours Degree in Education (Science).

I have served my country at various levels: as a secondary school teacher, a university lecturer, and as an administrator both at university and government levels. I am also a farmer and an entrepreneur.

I am deeply passionate about youth affairs, education, entrepreneurship, agricultural economics and rural development, as I am both a product and a proud dweller of a rural village.

I serve as a member of the SWAPO Party Central Committee, as well as the SWAPO Party Youth League Central Committee.

I am truly honoured and excited to sit in this August House alongside the giants who have led the very institutions and systems that nurtured and shaped my political career. I make special mention of the Right Honourable Prime Minister, Dr Elijah Tjitunga Ngurare, who, in his capacity as Secretary of the SWAPO Party Youth League at the time, was the first to send me, together with fellow members of the SWAPO Party Youth League, to South Africa for political training. That formative experience laid the foundation for my continued dedication to the ideals of the Party and the service of our nation.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Honourable Ephraim Nekongo, the Secretary of the SWAPO Party Youth League, for the invaluable opportunities that have significantly contributed to the solidification of my political career to this day. I also express sincere appreciation to the University of Namibia for its robust and dynamic system of student leadership, which continues to nurture and develop leaders across all spheres of national life. Allow me to appreciate my dear wife, my entire family, friends and comrades for their unwavering support.

Honourable Speaker,

I stand in this August House as a delegate of the majority of the youth of this country, entrusted through the SWAPO Party Youth League to represent their interests and aspirations. In fulfilling my mandate in Parliament, as stipulated in Article 63 of the Namibian Constitution, my primary focus will be on reviewing and enacting laws and policies that promote the socioeconomic and political advancement of young people, as pledged in our SWAPO Party Manifesto and reflected in all our National Development Plans.

My oversight responsibilities as a parliamentarian will centre on the effective implementation of policies and programmes in the areas of education, youth development, natural resources, information and communication, the economy, and industrialisation. Particular attention

will be given to reforming our economy and improving the livelihoods of our people.

Our government institutions must ensure that our people, especially the youth, benefit meaningfully from our natural resources. This should be achieved through opportunities in sustainable entrepreneurship, support for sustainable local investment, participation in global trade, and, above all, access to quality education and skills development.

I rise today as one of the youth representatives in this Eighth Parliament—a truly unique Parliament in the history of our Republic, where young leaders hold a significant presence in this chamber, something of which we should all be proud. This has instilled a renewed sense of hope and conviction among our citizens: hope for economic reform, hope for social progression, and hope for national prosperity. It is a hope further strengthened by the leadership of our first female President, Her Excellency Dr Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah.

Therefore, Honourable Members, we must work as a collective, regardless of our political differences, to review and pass laws and policies that give substance to the hopes of our people. We are the leadership of hope and conviction—not only for Namibia, but as an example to the world.

Honourable Speaker,

Allow me to join fellow honourable members in congratulating the Minister of Finance for tabling the 2025/2026 Budget to the tune of 106.3 billion Namibian Dollars.

Honourable Speaker,

Our business and economy sectors are still suffering from the far-reaching impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, which particularly affected youth entrepreneurship and employment. The pandemic caused disruptions in both global and local supply chains, impacting commodity prices, production activities, and Namibia's external demand. Many young people lost their income and employment due to retrenchments and the closure of businesses.

Recognising that our economy is continuing on the recovery path at a slow pace, and remains quite fragile and uneven as illustrated in the Fiscal Strategy presented to this August House, there is a pressing need to continue addressing systemic fragilities and imbalances. I would like to commend the Ministry of Finance for acknowledging, through its budgetary allocation, the need for trade promotion, industrial and small business development, and the promotion of investment opportunities. However, Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members of this House:

We must curb the infiltration of foreign enterprises into rural areas, providing goods and services that compete with local entrepreneurs, further impacting the informal sector, without undermining the principles of a mixed economy. Our laws and policies should not permit foreigners, such as Chinese or Indian nationals, to sell items like oomboha (steel nails) or ropes at rural malls in lihongo Village or Pusa Village in the Kapako Constituency of the Kavango West region. Consequently, the retail commercial sector should be reserved for locals to minimise competition.

We must protect local businesses through local preference guidelines and develop local capabilities through sector reservations. Therefore, this Parliament of hope and conviction should review and enact strong laws and guidelines that protect our local economy. Furthermore, the informal economy should be strengthened by providing the necessary economic infrastructure and social amenities, strategically placed to enhance productive business activities.

This Parliament of Hope and Conviction should review the Local Authority Act regarding the operations of informal businesses, particularly to increase trading hours for open markets and relax regulations for vendors. Such measures will undoubtedly stimulate the informal economy.

But Honourable Speaker,

It is high time that we urge our scholars to rename the term "informal markets" or "informal businesses" to a more respectful and inclusive term that does not undermine the efforts of those working in the sector. There is no reason why our nation's basic economy should be considered informal. This label disadvantages those within this sector by restricting their access to other markets within the broader business ecosystem.

The influx of foreign experts in the employment sector must be closely monitored and controlled through collaborative efforts by the Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board (NIPDB), the Office of the Labour Commissioner, and the Immigration Control Board. Inspections must be conducted on businesses to ascertain the number of foreign nationals employed, their skills, and to assess whether skills transfer is genuinely taking place. We must secure employment opportunities for our young people in order to close the unemployment gap.

Honourable Speaker,

Honourable Members,

71.1% of our population is under the age of 35 years. This demographic pattern has a great potential for economic growth due to a large workforce and significantly impact our economic, social and political development, but under a conducive environment.

The SWAPO Party-led government is committed to empowering the youth to drive economic development and reduce unemployment by 2030. Young people can only make a meaningful impact on our development when they are equipped with knowledge and skills through accessible and quality basic and higher education, including vocational training, alongside economic opportunities. The 2025/2026 Budget has allocated the largest portion to the Ministry of Education, Innovation, Youth, Sports, Arts and Culture for youth empowerment.

It is very exciting to note that around 825 million has been allocated to the construction and upgrading of classrooms, ablution facilities, including the construction of a new primary school in the Havana settlement in Windhoek, and the construction of a hostel at Onkumbula Combined School in the remote Oshikoto region. These interventions focus on expanding school infrastructure and reducing regional disparities in access to education.

However, Honourable Speaker, infrastructure development must be supported by adequate funding that is availed on time to ensure that schools have the necessary resources, including textbooks and learning materials. We should also be clear and take a firm position on the admission of grade 11 and Advanced Subsidiary learners to tertiary institutions. The Ministry should further ensure there is an ongoing,

tailored professional development programme to ensure that teachers remain current with best practices and can address the diverse needs of our learners.

Honourable Speaker,

The Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system is designed for innovation and transformation, to provide skills-based training that equips young people with the knowledge and competencies needed for employment and entrepreneurship. The allocation of about 25 million to the capital projects of TVET, along with our priority to roll out free TVET and higher education, is highly commendable.

However, our TVET graduates face challenges in securing employment and accessing financial support to establish their businesses as potential entrepreneurs. I challenge our banking sector to initiate an Innovation Fund to stimulate our entrepreneurs by providing them with access to tools and financial support, enabling them to bring unique and innovative ideas to life. Similarly, I challenge local authorities across Namibia to prioritise the development of business incubators for young entrepreneurs.

Honourable Speaker,

It is very exciting to note that the government has prioritised the support of youth programmes for skills development and capacity building. The allocation of 1.2 billion Namibian dollars to the vote for Sport, Youth and National Services is highly commendable, as it will benefit over one million young people in our country, according to the 2023 Population and Housing Census.

We commend the prioritisation of sports by Her Excellency Dr Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, President of the Republic of Namibia, which has resulted in the allocation of 200 million to the construction of sports fields.

While we look forward to the full implementation of these projects, I urge young Namibian entrepreneurs and experts to strategically position themselves, not only to secure a share of the 200 million, but to take ownership of our developmental projects. It is high time that our local architects, quantity surveyors from NUST, project managers from UNAM, engineers from the UNAM José Eduardo dos Santos Campus, bricklayers from Okakarara VTC, plumbers from Zambezi VTC and Kayec in Ondangwa, including the landscapers from UNAM Ogongo Campus, general suppliers from the school of hustle, sport promoters, entertainers like Zuluboy of Onayena, and merchandisers get a chance to be part of these developments. This will demonstrate that our tertiary institutions and

systems have indeed developed local capacity over the past 35 years of existence.

While championing the strengthening of sports, the education sector must ensure that Sport subjects are considered as promotional subjects across our curriculum; and High Institutions including TVET must professionalize Sports as a career. We should commercialise sports and our creative talents (under the creative industry) instead of sports being viewed or considered as a hobby, which undermines the creative talent of our nation.

Honourable Speaker,

Honourable Members,

The youth unemployment rate in Namibia is currently at 44.4%, affecting individuals, families, and societies. This leads to personal hardship and increases the risks of mental health problems, crime, and substance abuse, especially among young people. The sustainable solution to youth unemployment in Namibia lies in the creation of beneficiation. For too long, we have preached a common phrase: "Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime." We have educated the youth through our education and training systems, but it seems that we have not provided adequate rivers for the youth to fish from. The solution lies in value addition.

Last week, we witnessed Her Excellency, President Dr Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, inaugurating the production at the Hylron Oshivela Plant in Arandis, Erongo region. This marks a true definition of industrialisation supporting our developmental agenda of value and natural resources beneficiation, while creating sustainable employment for our skilled youth. We are looking forward to other investors in the mining, fishing, and agriculture sectors to expand their investments in value addition here in Namibia. Moreover, this 8th Parliament of Hope and Conviction must enact a law that enforces investments in our natural resources, scaling up to value addition.

While investing in employment creation programs and initiatives, we should enact laws that protect young people employed in other informal sectors like Households (24,162 people); and Wholesale and Retail Trade (28,405 people). We need to protect every Namibian worker from labour exploitations.

Honourable Speaker,

The SWAPO Party led government is further committed to enhance food security and reduce food imports through the acceleration of food production capacity and ensuring that the existing green schemes are fully productive. It is therefore commendable to see an allocating of over 163 million to the Crop Production Programs, including the operations of

Green Scheme Irrigation Projects; and most important to note is the allocation of over 10 million to the Cereal and Horticulture Value Chain Development Schemes; which is another step to value addition and beneficiation in the agricultural sector.

While acknowledging the inadequate funding on land purchase towards land resettlement in the 2025/2026 budget, it is worth noting that the modality around land resettlement needs serious review.

Honourable Speaker,

Government has resettled a total number of 5502 resettlement beneficiaries since the inception of the resettlement program. This is a big number for us to have achieved food security and food sovereignty. I request that this 8th Parliament of Hope and Conviction advance the following on this matter:

1. Currently, the Resettlement Process has closed off a young farmer, a graduate in Agriculture from UNAM Neudam/ UNAM Ogongo/ NUST/Marcopolo/Nile Vocational Centers who does not own any livestock or production, but trained in the agricultural field. I think we should develop a model of allocating production plots to young farmers with these credentials.

2. Once a farmer is resettled, he/she qualifies for a Post Resettlement Support Fund of N\$200,000.00 as a free- collateral loan at Agribank. This fund is not sufficient for production and limits productive land use. Government resettlement farmers should be provided with sufficient funding for production and infrastructures investments through a funding schemes intentionally developed for resettled farmers to succeed;

3. Moreover, there should be provision for those that have successfully produced to get an opportunity to purchase the farms from government in order to further invest on their farms.

4. Lastly, the Ministry must strengthen the monitoring and oversee function of the farms by ensuring that the purpose for which the farm was provided is attained.

Fellow Namibians, it is important to note that government resettlement farms are not meant for holiday destinations ONLY, but for national food security and to support government in this endeavour for economic growth, including sustainable employment creation.

With your permission honourable speaker, honourable members, allow me to thank the Right Honourable Prime Minister for having taken up the assignment of provision of portable water by drilling boreholes for communities across the country while he was at the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform. The communities of Akazulu and

Omeyantalala of Nehale Lyampingana and Okankolo Constituencies of Oshikoto region have received boreholes and desalination plants, fully functional. The community of Ngone Village of Kavango East region have access to portable water too. Otjekua village in the western part of Omusati region- a borehole is drilled and the community is drinking portable water. A borehole and mini desalination plant are functional at Condor in the Sesfontein Constituency of Kunene region. In the 2025/2026 Budget, over 500 million is allocated for Bulk Water Infrastructure Development, and Integrated Water Resources Management, to ensure that every Namibian have access to adequate, quality and safer water.

Honourable Speaker,

Our promise to Quality Health and Social Welfare is crucial for our citizens as it contributes to a better quality of life and allow our people to live healthier, and more productive in fulfilling lives. We welcome the commitment to expand access to quality healthcare in rural areas and establish intermediate hospitals that meet private healthcare standards. Therefore, the allocation of over 700 million to the construction, renovation and upgrading of various health infrastructures including the construction of Onyaanya Primary Health Care Center in Oshikoto region is very commendable.

However, Honourable Speaker, Honourable members,

The Ministry of Health and Social Services must fast track strategies to implement strict regulations on pricing for essential medications; and remove middlemen in the procurement of pharmaceuticals. We should amend the Procurement Act to provide long-term awards for tenders of clinical supplies like gloves, syringes, toilet papers and needles that have potential to be manufactured locally. The long-term tenders provide guarantee for our local investors to industrialize and in return provide employment and local beneficiation.

Honourable Speaker,

Our government is committed to ensure equitable access to land, housing and sanitation services for our people both in urban and rural areas. Over 1 Billion in the 2025/2026 budget is allocated to housing delivery, including the 500 Million targeted for the formalization of informal settlements; while over 16 Million is allocated to Rural Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Programs.

However, we need to change our approach towards land servicing and housing delivery. Middle-income people, majority being the youth cannot afford housing in urban area; and are subjected to high rent costs while

forced to reside in urban areas by employment opportunities. Access to land is a fundamental right and a cornerstone for achieving social equity and economic empowerment, therefore the process to acquiring land and housing should not prioritize business opportunities for the few in the housing industry.

Government through local authorities should be empowered to undertake land servicing. We should capacitate local authorities with machineries, equipment and personnel to handle land servicing. In return young people will afford land to construct their houses; and many TVET graduates like plumbers will secure sustainable employment.

With these Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members I support the Appropriation Bill.

I thank you.