

# **REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY,  
DR. HAGE G. GEINGOB,  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA,  
AT THE OPENING OF  
THE  
FOREIGN POLICY REVIEW CONFERENCE**

**JULY 25, 2016**

**WINDHOEK**

*Check against delivery*

Former President of the Republic of Namibia, Comrade Hifikepunye Lukas Pohamba,  
Comrade Dr. Nickey Iyambo, Vice-President of the Republic of Namibia;  
The Rt. Hon. Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia;  
Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi, Speaker of the National Assembly;  
Hon. Margaret Mensah-Williams, Chairperson of the National Council;  
Your Lordship, Chief Justice Peter Shivute;  
Hon. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International  
Relations and Co-Operation;  
Former Prime Ministers and Deputy Prime Ministers;  
Hon. Ministers and Deputy Ministers;  
Hon. Members of Parliament;  
Comrade Nangolo Mbumba, Secretary-General of the Governing Party, SWAPO; and  
Hon. Venaani, Leader of the official Opposition;  
Former Ministers;  
Your Excellencies, Namibian Ambassadors and High Commissioners;  
Members of the Diplomatic Corps;  
Namibian Heads of Mission;  
Local and international speakers and moderators;  
Members of the Media;  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to this “foreign policy” review conference. As you might be aware one of the first changes made when I became President, was to rename our Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation. This was done to reflect the dynamics of the changing world order and modern day diplomacy.

We live in a globalized world where we need to hold hands across countries and continents to ensure the ecological survival of our planet and of human kind. We may speak different languages, have different religions, and different colors, but at the end of the day, we are all human beings. We, therefore, no longer speak of foreign affairs, but of international relationships, cooperation and partnerships in charting common developmental paths. Consistent with that change I will, henceforth, refer to the exercise to be undertaken this week as a review of Namibia’s Policy on International Relations and Cooperation and not foreign policy review.

We have, furthermore, devoted the first year in office to formulating a home grown developmental agenda, the Harambee Prosperity Plan, which elucidates the Namibian narrative and fast tracks our developmental priorities over the next four years. Vision 2030 remains our long term plan. The NDP’s remain our five-year developmental scene setters and Harambee guides the implementation heartbeat of both long and medium term plans.

As we are in the process of formulating our fifth National Development Plan and with Harambee in place, now is an appropriate time to undertake a review of our Policy on International Relations and Cooperation since domestic and foreign policies should speak to one other. In other words, we would like to Harambee not only in Namibia, but we would like the World to Harambee with us.

Some of the key tenets of our thinking on International Relations and Cooperation are captured in various speeches that I have delivered at regional and international platforms during the past year, my maiden State of the Nation Address and in Pillar 5 of the Harambee Prosperity Plan. Today, I would like to use this opportunity to amplify some key precepts that should be captured as outcomes in our revised policy on international relations and cooperation. In doing so, allow me to start by grounding my statement through several observations about modern day diplomacy.

Traditional diplomacy, practiced by many countries in the pre and post-Cold War Era has been in rapid decline over the past several years. The end of the bi-polar world coupled with the simultaneous rise of what international political commentator Fareed Zakaria refers to as “the rest” has led to a change of international agendas and with that, a change in the character and tone of diplomacy. Over the past decades developing countries have grown rapidly, and today account more for global economic output than a few decades ago. It is projected that by the year 2050, with the exception of the United States of America, none of the current group of 7 industrialized

economies will be in the top 5 largest economies. Some have already lost their economic rankings to China and India. In Africa, there has been change in relative positions of economic strength with South Africa losing pole position to Nigeria in the last few years.

The evolution of communication technology has led to redundancy of traditional diplomats. Gone are the days of cumbersome and dated reports. In today's world of social media and twenty-four hour news cycles, diplomats are expected to be up to date and technology savvy to ensure that any information he/she generates has relevant context. In his book titled *History and the evolution of diplomacy*, Richard Langhorne explains this point by stating, "*A serious part of the atmosphere which this quotation catches was caused by the steadily increasing sense that the gathering and assessment of information about foreign societies and governments which had been the principal purpose of diplomacy since the emergence of the Resident Ambassador had been overtaken by other and more efficient means of communication*".

Modern day diplomacy involves a kaleidoscope of actors. These days, it is not strange to see Non-Governmental Organizations, as well as Multinational Corporations and even individuals, such as Bill and Melinda Gates acting as important stakeholders in the world of diplomacy. It is all about credibility, knowledge and the ability to process information

at breathtaking speeds. Modern day diplomats are expected to be knowledgeable in various fields such as finance, economics, energy, environment, health and security.

Terrorism has also impacted the modern-day diplomat as terror threats have fundamentally changed diplomatic intercourse. In this regard, we condemn the persistent terror attacks throughout the world and express our heartfelt sympathies to nations and people who suffer the abomination of dastardly terror attacks. This modern day evil has become a barbaric and unacceptable form of articulating discontent with the modern world. As former freedom fighters, we are prone to believe that one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter. We however can find no justification to defend flying a passenger plane into the Twin Towers in New York, driving a truck into crowds of innocent people in Nice or walking into the Brussels airport with guns, bombs and murderous intent. These indiscriminate, senseless and barbaric attacks are an attack on all of us as they can happen anywhere, anytime, to anybody and have nothing to do with freedom and everything to do with hatred. As diplomats, we need to closely examine the root causes of the hate and hopelessness that drives these terror attacks and which provides fertile ground for our young people to subscribe to the message of terror as opposed to diplomacy. War starts where diplomacy fails. Where have we failed? These are the difficult questions today's diplomats must grapple with.

Globally, many countries have moved away from the traditional diplomacy characterised by niceties and subtle cajoling. The Countries these days use diplomacy as a tool to carry out and execute their political and economic agendas. If we should redefine our

International Relations Policy, it would be that it is an extension of our Domestic Policy. Therefore, our Policy on International Relations must serve our domestic interests. This approach to International Relations was accentuated during the Reagan Administration, by Jeane Kirkpatrick, whose approach to diplomacy led to the birth of the *Kirkpatrick Doctrine* in which the United States gave support to anti-communist dictatorial regimes as long as they towed along with Washington's agenda. This is a perfect example of a country single-mindedly using foreign policy as an extension of its domestic policy to achieve its objectives. It was the same Kirkpatrick who introduced a more aggressive and direct tone in diplomatic dialogue.

We cannot continue adhering to outdated principles and continue practicing the diplomatic doctrine of the Cold War Era. That era did not need to deal with an digitally interconnected world where hackers can penetrate classified electronic files from remote locations. Where the internet provides a global audience for whoever seeks it and social media provides breaking, first hand accounts of global issues.

Times are changing quickly and we need to adapt to these changes with the same speed. These days, as Africans, we are talking of the second phase of the struggle; the struggle for economic emancipation. Our diplomacy must also enter this second phase. Diplomacy should not only reflect our fears, but also our aspirations. The new world is indeed a scary place but its also a place where there are many opportunities. We need

to understand what those opportunities are for a small country like Namibia and utilize modern tools to facilitate our developmental aspirations.

Namibia has made significant progress in terms of development since gaining independence 26 years ago. Our arrival at this stage was due to the culmination of the armed struggle for national liberation. This was made possible by the relentless efforts and sacrifices of our sons and daughters, augmented by the support of our African brothers and sisters, the progressive international community and our friends and sympathizers. It is for this reason that Namibia is known as a Child of international solidarity because our independence was conceived by the unity of international support and midwifed by the United Nations. Given this fact, Namibia has adopted the central tenet of its International Relations Policy the slogan that "we are a friend to all and an enemy to none". We support multilateralism and oppose uni-lateralism and tri-lateralism.

Given the fact that many friendly nations and organizations stood by us during the time of apartheid colonialism, Namibia will continue to express solidarity with those who are denied self determination. These include our brothers and sisters in Palestine and Western Sahara. As we enjoy our freedom and democracy, so should others as we believe freedom is indivisible. Democracy is indivisible.

The Namibian House should also be seen in the context of a neighborhood. If there is instability in the neighborhood, the Namibian House cannot be stable. As part of our international responsibilities, to the extent feasible, Namibia will continue to contribute



to peace making and peace keeping operations under the umbrella of the United Nations, the African Union and regional alliances.

As pan-Africanists, it goes without saying that our African brothers and sisters will always be welcome in Namibia. As a first step we have recently abolished visa requirements into Namibia for diplomatic and official African passport holders. We are committed to extend this privilege to all-African passport holders by initially issuing visas on arrival and eventually abolishing visa requirements.

Our Policy on International Relations and Cooperation should, therefore, be embedded in the doctrine of Pan Africanism as espoused by some of the great founding pan Africanist philosophers such as Sylvester Williams, Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba, Julius Nyerere and Sam Nujoma.

Our Policy on International Relations and Cooperation should also take into consideration what I refer to as the New Africa. The New Africa is a Africa where coups d'états are no longer tolerated, where leaders retire in dignity, and an Africa that reflects its true narrative. In essence, the New Africa is the Africa We Want, as espoused in Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

In relation to coups, please permit me to condemn the coup attempt in Turkey as it goes against the grain of electoral democratic norms and practices.

As Africans, it is important that we remain intellectually honest about our challenges while resisting the temptation of persistent Afro-pessimism.

It has become common to read international magazines and journals writing glowing articles about Namibia. It is heartwarming to note how well the outside world regards Namibia as a rolemodel and tells our story in a positive light. It is ironic that as Namibians, we are not so good at telling our own story. Ambassadors and High Commissioners, we need to take charge of the narrative and remind the world of this small country with big aspirations called Namibia. Over the past year, we have revived the Namibian narrative through concepts such as One Namibia One Nation, the Namibian House, No-One Should Feel Left Out and the War Against Poverty and Corruption. These concepts were formulated into the Harambee Prosperity Plan which is aimed at helping Namibians to unite for a common cause.

Over the past two decades, Namibia, the Child of International Solidarity, has grown into a mature nation, with a strong democracy, built on the foundations of peace, the rule of law and strong institutions. Through sound electoral processes, we have ensured the peaceful transition of power in leadership, starting with the Founding President of the Nation, Comrade Sam Shafiishuuna Nujoma, an icon of Namibia's struggle for independence, who led us through the liberation struggle and the process of nation-building after independence, followed by the former President, Comrade Hifikepunye

Pohamba, under whose able leadership, peace and stability was consolidated and finally, Yours Truly, tasked with ushering in an era of prosperity.

The strong foundation laid by our leadership since 1990 has resulted in Namibia having a sound and robust Governance Architecture which has not gone unnoticed by the international community. We are rated fifth as the best governed country on the African continent by the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance; rated fourth in Africa as a “clean country” in terms of corruption by Transparency International; and ranked first as the country with the “freest press in Africa” by Reporters without Borders. The aforementioned narrative brings to fore another tenet that should be inscribed in our new international relations policy, namely that Namibia will always advance the cause of a vibrant, inclusive democracy where the people are the ultimate sovereigns. We are hard at work ensuring transparent processes, robust systems and independent institutions which will continuously buttress our democracy.

Similarly, our macroeconomic architecture is admirable, underpinned by financial stability evident in a world-class banking system (ranked number 33 in the world by the World Economic Forum), and well-regulated through a prudent monetary policy for the past 24 years. Both Fitch and Moody’s, have consistently accorded Namibia investment grade ratings, indicating that foreign investors have confidence in the Namibian economy.

Just like our people do not eat good policies, our people also do not eat good diplomacy. So how can we ensure that our diplomacy speaks to our aspiration of attaining prosperity? As I already mentioned, diplomacy must also enter the second stage of the struggle, where the pursuit of economic emancipation must be supported by economic diplomacy. Let me briefly espouse on what I mean.

In Namibia and globally, social deficits and inequalities present the greatest threats to democracy. That is why in Namibia we have declared an all out war against poverty, corruption and inequality. However, governments alone cannot resolve these deficits. We need the full participation of the private sector and all stakeholders.

It is imperative for diplomats to engage private sector players abroad. Nothing prevents you from organizing inward or outward trade and investment missions. Here I would like to single out our mission in the United States, which over the past few years has been successful in arranging trade and investment events in the USA and facilitating numerous USA business and investment visits to Namibia. I encourage other missions to emulate this excellent example. Recently we had an excellent experience in business-to-business interaction during my State visit to Botswana.

Whenever I visit another country, I would like a trade and investment event to be incorporated in the program. I expect to see more trade and investment facilitation from all our missions, especially from our main trading partners, like South Africa.

It is crucial that our Policy on International Relations and Cooperation pays special attention to the promotion of foreign investment through win-win partnerships. Economic diplomacy needs to be employed in order to connect investment opportunities with investors with an aim to finance our developmental objectives.

With this in mind, it is crucial that we emphasize and support the capacity building of our Foreign Service personnel at Headquarters and at our diplomatic missions in order to become effective economic ambassadors. This includes becoming social media literate and conversant in other languages.

It has been said that it is important to adjust to changing times and still hold on to changing principles. Although there are many aspects of our International Relations Policy that need to adjust to meet the demands of an ever changing global landscape, as a nation that aspires to uphold the spirit of Pan Africanism, we must always remain true to our identity.

In conclusion, we will continue to honour our obligations to the international community and to uphold values that have made Namibia a respectable and trusted member of the international community.

It has been said that change brings opportunity. Since 21 March 1990, the geo political landscape has significantly changed. We remain mindful of the challenges but we also see the opportunity to effectively pursue our national interest through a modern international relations policy. Let us seize this opportunity to write a new chapter in our relationship with the international community. I wish you all the best in your deliberations and now declare this conference officially open.

Thank you.