

STATEMENT BY THE DPM AND MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS AND COOPERATION ON THE OCCASION OF GENERAL
STAFF MEETING, 11 MARCH 2016 AT 9H00

Hon. Deputy Minister Dr Peya Mushelenga
Hon. Deputy Minister Maureen Hinda
H.E. Amb. Tuliameni Kalomoh, Special Advisor
H.E. Amb. Selma Ashipala-Musavyi, Permanent Secretary
Heads of Department and other members of Management
All Staff members of MIRCO

1. Pleasantries

The last time we met in such a setting was in November last year. At that meeting among others I explained that our calendar could not allow for us to have our end of year function, but that we shall have it at the beginning of the year. Our meeting this morning is a prelude to our evening function.

2. Welcoming of returning diplomats

Let me at the outset wish you all a belated Happy 2016 with the best of health. I also welcome back to headquarters all returning diplomats and other Foreign Service officials. I trust that you have broadened your knowledge and expertise and we look forward to your contribution as we seek to transform our Ministry into an entity of excellence. I also wish to congratulate all of you who got promoted. As you climb the ladder in your career, continue to work hard and remember that the sky is the limit and hard work pays to both the nation and to an individual. In the same vein, I welcome those who have joined the Ministry, we are looking forward to you injecting new energy into the work of the Ministry.

3. Bilateral and Multilateral relations and Cooperation

We had a number of successful bilateral engagements in 2015/2016 and I wish to commend the department for their hard work. However, successful convening of Joint Commissions of Cooperation / Political

and Diplomatic Consultations / Bilateral meetings and engagements require proper preparations, follow up and implementation, preparations cannot start only when a trip is forthcoming, but should be ongoing throughout the year to have value of those engagements and also, that the Desk is ready for any bilateral engagement at short notice. Success lies in the three Ps, which are PREPARATION, PREPARATION, PREPARATION! This cannot be stressed enough. Officers must remain on top of all development in their area of responsibility, and must do daily research.

It should also be understood that contact with the line Ministries is not only through letters signed by the Permanent Secretary, but very important to have **contact persons** in the line Ministries that we can contact directly. People to people contact is essential in following up issues.

4. Multilateral Cooperation

At the Multilateral level, Namibia continues to be relevant at international fora. This explains why, in addition to our membership to the UN Human Rights Council, the AU Peace and Council, last year Namibia was elected to serve into the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG).

In January this year, the 26th AU Assembly was convened in Addis Ababa. Among the various decisions taken was the operationalization of the First Ten Year Plan of the AU Agenda 2063. An integral part of this First Ten Year Plan are the Flagship projects. These are projects aimed at enhancing the integration of our continent. For our Ministry, it is our responsibility to ensure that Namibia participate and benefit from these projects. While it is the primary responsibility of the respective department, it is the national obligation of all of us to familiarize ourselves with these projects for continental and national benefit.

5. Annual Plan and Performance Agreements

The 2014 SWAPO Party Election Manifesto, the ruling Party is based on peace, stability and prosperity. As the Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation, we need to be clear how we are going to continue to effectively contribute to raising prosperity. To this end, our Annual Plan for 2016/17 should be focused, quantifiable and most important, achievable. At the same time, I wish to say a few words about our Performance Agreements. This is an inclusive process where we all have to sign Performance Agreements. Granted, it is a new practice but one that is timely. We all need to take responsibility for our work. When all of us carry out our responsibilities, the Ministry will succeed and we shall all be proud of ourselves. Now that these will be our second series of Performance Agreements, I expect them to be better than last year, because I believe we have gained experience from the first ones.

6. Trade and Investment

In our Strategic Plan, the promotion of trade and investment is a major objective. A major International Investment Conference is taking place in Namibia organized by the Ministry of Industrialization, Trade and SME Development. Our responsibility is to ensure that all our diplomatic missions, General Consulate and Honorary Consulates mobilize investors to come to this conference and take away bankable projects. I am aware that the Office of the Permanent Secretary has already reached out to all of the above. What is essential is for the various desk officers to follow up to ensure record participation.

7. Foreign Policy Review

The Foreign policy of Namibia is greatly informed by our national liberation struggle and the regional and international events that surrounded it. Looking back 26 years, the world has changed and continues to do so. At Independence, we had the Southern African

Developing Coordinating conference, today we have the Southern African Development Community. The Organization of African Unity has been transformed into the African Union. Since 1990, the membership of the United Nations has grown from 160 to 193. The international discourse is dominated by new and emerging issues such as Climate Change, Migration, and Terrorism among others. On the domestic front, our population continues to grow and the social and economic development needs are also evolving. All that put together warrants the need to review our foreign policy and the management thereof. Management has embarked upon a process of reviewing the Foreign Policy. At this stage we have decided upon an outline, and the inputs of staff members will also be requested at the appropriate stage. The Foreign Policy is an evolving policy, and should benefit also from the policies of the countries that we are dealing with. Each staff members must research the foreign policies of the countries of their responsibility, so that Namibia can respond or be proactive in terms of the policies of our partners. In July this year, we shall officially launch the review process. All of you will be involved in this process one way or the other. We also need to review the Manual of Operations, the Protocol manual and the visa Manual. It will be an enriching experience for all of us and the country at large.

8. Self -development

International Relations are dynamic. They are not static. It therefore follows that we need to constantly be up to date with current affairs. We should sharpen our negotiations tools, our capacity to market our country and innovative ways to inform policy. We do not only learn by physically going out to foreign countries. We can build our capacity by using modern technology. That is online learning. Of course all these will be within the financial means available.

9. The use of new technology in our daily activities

With new developments in technology, it is easy for us to share information immediately via our smart phones, iPad or tablets by way of emails, or files that we upload or scan. In this regard I want to say that, no matter how useful these tools are, an official record must exist of any information of the Ministry. Information sent or received via email must be printed and filed. In our Government emails are not yet recognized as official correspondence, so please remember that the signature of the Minister, PS or Head of Department is required to make any correspondence count as official Government information. This does not mean that I am not encouraging staff to use the new tools at their disposal, but to keep in mind that official records must exist. I have also noted that, we need to improve in the communication of information between the Ministry and other government agencies and institutions in the country. I know the Post Office remains an agency we can use to send our mails, but before the letter is posted, a copy can be emailed or faxed, more particular if the matter is urgent.

10. Posting policy

As many of you are keenly aware, one of the milestone achievement of 2015 was the rollout of the Posting Policy with the first Namibian diplomats selected and deployed on the basis of competitive examinations and interviews. I am very happy that our Ministry institutionalized this policy and that postings are now subject to an institutional process with rules provided for in the posting policy. I invite you to support this process and to continue making comments or additions where you see such comments can improve the implementation of the policy. At the same time, I also encourage you to look beyond any teething problems. Any policy will come with initial mishaps and it can only be perfected in the fullness of time with reflections.

13. Team Work

The President has been emphasizing the harambee spirit. I cannot stress that enough. We must all work towards building our team.

14. Importance of Language Training

I wish to emphasize to the staff of the Ministry, the importance of speaking/ understanding at least two foreign languages before staff members are sent on posting. We operate in the international arena, and it is important when you are posted to a non-English speaking country, to at least be able to make your way through in the spoken language. The Ministry is in the process of establishing a language laboratory to facilitate multilingualism. We have also to encourage other Namibians to have interest into international languages to secure recruitment into international organizations.

15. Rotation

We all have different expertise and talents. We need to ensure that every staff member is correctly placed to the extent possible. The President had declared this year as one of implementation. We can only implement our Annual Plan when our strength in the Ministry is evenly spread. Therefore beginning April many of you are going to be rotated to be placed according to your valuable strength. A diplomat is supposed to be versatile. Your exposure should be broad, only when we shall succeed. I know this is not new as when I was a Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1990 to 1995 rotation was used.

16. The importance of coordination within the Ministry

Coordination between Multilateral Relations and Cooperation, Bilateral Relations and Cooperation, Protocol and Office of the PS and Minister, especially on issues that involve State House. Preparations are done at the Departmental level, and information not always received on time to allow for proper research and preparations. Therefore our in-house coordination must improve and become very efficient, to avoid that issues leave the Ministry without the proper departments/offices having been informed.

17. Human Capital Optimization

The need to streamline activities towards existing budgetary constraints cannot be over-emphasized. Expenditures cuts in terms of overtime, procurement of services and travel are a priority, to ensure that the Ministry effectively curbs spending in those two areas, especially on overtime.

The call to reorganize work priorities is a national priority in order to significantly reduce the budget deficit, particularly in government spending, and also to enable a good portion of our budget to feed the sectors that have an immediate impact on poverty eradication.

18. Overtime

The cost of compensation towards overtime, has been noticeably high, and is an aspect which must be governed through the legislative provisions enshrined in the Labour Act, Act No. 11 of 2007. It must be understood that the provisions exist primarily to ensure that employees are protected in terms of carrying out duties at the workplace during normal work hours, whilst ensuring that sufficient rest is attained in-between and after normal work hours and over the weekends. Overtime should therefore only be performed in cases of absolute necessity, where completion of work would otherwise not be possible during normal working hours due to unforeseen circumstances, or as an emergency measure.

It is on that notion that going forward, the following shall apply:

1. Overtime will no longer be performed unless it is deemed as an absolute necessity. The decision to perform duties beyond normal work hours, lies solely with the Accounting Officer, under the auspices and confines of the relevant legislation.
2. Any work performed outside normal working hours will no longer be compensated, unless prior authorization has been granted to carry out the work as such.
3. All the due procedures must be followed to obtain the required permission from the Ministry of Labor through Human Resources, subject to the Accounting Officer granting the authorization to carry out the work as such, to ensure that we comply with the legislative provisions in place.

Kindly, therefore, ensure that all work is streamlined as the policy provisions will now be strictly enforced with immediate effect.

19. Service delivery and procurement of goods and services

Service rendering and service requests must be done within turnaround times, and only as necessary. In the same vein, permission must be granted prior to services being carried out, as all expenditures must be approved by the Accounting Officer.

Extreme measures are being implemented to ensure that expenses are curbed as such, ranging from telephony, to other services.

Whilst noting that effective planning must be implemented to meet the benchmark standards on service delivery, persons requesting the

services should attempt to adhere to the set procedures to ensure that the services are rendered on time.

11 Wellness centre

Let me take this opportunity to thank the Wellness Committee for the initiative taken to take care of our wellness so that we can be even more productive. I also wish to congratulate you for the Valentine's Day event you have organized. I look forward to next year celebration and to bigger bouquet of flowers and a bigger chocolate. I also appreciate your proposals on how to bring about general wellness in the Ministry.

12. Discipline and code of conduct

Our Strategic Plan prescribes the necessary comportment for us. It is not enough to have high expertise while lacking in good behavior. We together are the projection of Namibia's image, whether in Namibia or abroad. We individually and collectively mirror what Namibia is. It is therefore important that at all times we carry ourselves in a befitting manner. Indiscipline will not be tolerated. Given special nature of our work, we shall engage the Public Service of Namibia for a special Code of Conduct for the Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation.

Professionalism and proper work conduct is key to upholding the image of the ministry.

Let me end here as we continue in the evening.

I want to thank you

French Merci

German Danke

Arabic Shukraan

Russian Spasibo

Swahili Asante

Portuguese Obrigada

Spanish Gracias

Chinese Xiexie