

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**OPENING STATEMENT BY THE HON. DR. PEYA
MUSHELENGA, MP, DEPUTY MINISTER OF
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION OF THE
REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA, AT THE OCCASION OF THE THIRD
SESSION OF THE NAMIBIA-CUBA JOINT WORKING, 18TH
DECEMBER 2017**

Honourable Ileana NÚÑEZ MODOCHE, Deputy- Minister of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment, and Co-Chair of the Joint Working Group;

Distinguished Members of both Delegations;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Members of the Media;

Comrades and Friends;

Good Morning

We are delighted and honoured to host this Third Session of the Namibia-Cuba Joint Working Group and to warmly welcome Your Excellency and your Delegation to the Republic of Namibia. In the same vein, I wish to send well wishes to the strong people of Cuba and much success as you are rebuilding your country following the devastation of hurricane Irma.

I do hope you will also take time to enjoy the fascinating Namibia with its contrasting landscapes, friendly people and multi-cultural cuisine.

I am grateful that we were both able to find time from our busy schedules to consult on issues of mutual interests although late in the year, especially with the fatigue and the long flight, I am absolutely confident that our deliberations will be fruitful.

Honourable Co-Chair

In that spirit, our meeting here today is in compliance with the framework of the existing traditional relations of friendship, cooperation, eagerness to strengthen and further enhance the bilateral economic and trade relations, between the Governments of the Republic of Namibia and the Republic of Cuba. Following our meeting in Havana, a year ago, in September 2016, we decided to hold the Third Session of the Joint Working Group (JWG) Namibia- Cuba in Windhoek, Namibia as per the Joint Working Group Agreement.

The main objective of the Joint Working Group is to review the progress of the bilateral relations in order to strengthen and deepen economic and trade relations between both countries, in line with the mandate given by our leaders.

Similarly, the Session of the Namibia-Cuba Joint Working Group serves as a platform where the two countries identified areas of cooperation such as health, trade and investment, tourism, agriculture, fisheries, energy and education.

Furthermore, this meeting will allow us to review how much we have advanced since the Second Session of the Joint Working Group, as well as to identify new areas of cooperation, which would contribute to the realization of the political aspirations of our two governments with the view to deepen and diversify our economic and trade relations.

It is important to note that our two countries share a common history of struggle against apartheid, inequality and excellent bilateral relations, and in this spirit we require concerted efforts to increase trade and investment relations, hence, the importance of the Joint Working Group.

Honourable Co-Chair

Allow me to express my satisfaction with the positive results achieved during the period in the sectors of health, fishing, and sports. In this regard, I recognize the positive role played by the Joint Working Group for monitoring and implementation of the actions agreed at the previous meeting. Both sides agreed on the importance of this mechanism for strengthening economic and trade relations. I therefore, would like to commend the Cuban government for the continued support to Namibia. Despite the challenges and the economic embargoes, the Cuban government continues to provide steadfast and solid support to Namibia.

Honourable Co-Chair

I am encourage to note that huge strides have been made in the health and fisheries sector as well as reciprocal visits. We are grateful for the two scholarships in the field of medicine offered by the Cuban government for the 2017/2018 Academic Year.

It is interesting to mention that from 5-7 June 2017, Namibia successfully hosted the Fifth Continental Conference of solidarity with Cuba. More than 180 delegates representing 26 African countries as well as Cuba and organizations from the United

States of America attended the Conference. The Conference was held in Windhoek, Namibia, under the theme, “*Intensifying solidarity with Cuba and Preserving the legacy of Fidel and Che*”.

H. E. Dr. Hage G. Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia officially opened the Conference. The Conference was also graced by H. E. Dr. Sam Nujoma, Founding President of the Republic of Namibia, late Comrade Andimba Toivo Ya Toivo, President of the Namibia-Cuba Friendship Association, and Commander Victor Dreke, who was second in command of the Cuban battalion that Che Guevara headed on its missions to Africa.

Honourable Co-Chair

I am delighted to inform that the Namibian (Ministry of Urban and Rural Development) and Cuban side (UNECA) have agreed to retain and extend their term for further one year of the five (5) of the seventeen (17) professionals whose term of service is coming to an end in December 2017. The purpose of this arrangement is to allow for a smooth transfer of local knowledge and easy acclimatisation of the new group.

The choice of the Cuban experts who are coming to Namibia is preceded by a selection process which includes interviews with the identified professionals. In this context, a team from the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development travelled to Cuba from 27 November to 4 December 2017 with the view to conduct face-to-face interviews with the identified professionals. The new group is expected to arrive and assume duty in Namibia in February 2018.

I note that Namibia was this year unable to send students to Cuba to study medicine due to an economic downturn that the country is currently facing. However, we are optimistic that with the austerity measures firmly in place, we will soon witness major advancements and a positive economic outlook.

Honourable Co-Chair

Namibia-Cuba Relations have remained excellent over the years and both sides have cooperated constructively in the international arena and bilaterally. Namibia persistently supports Cuba in her efforts to have the more than five decade old economic and financial embargo imposed on Cuba by the US lifted. I hope that we will be able to strengthen this relationship with regular annual consultations.

In conclusion, it is hope that our discussions will bring to fruition Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding that are implementable with tangible results for the mutual benefits of the people of our two countries.

I thank you.