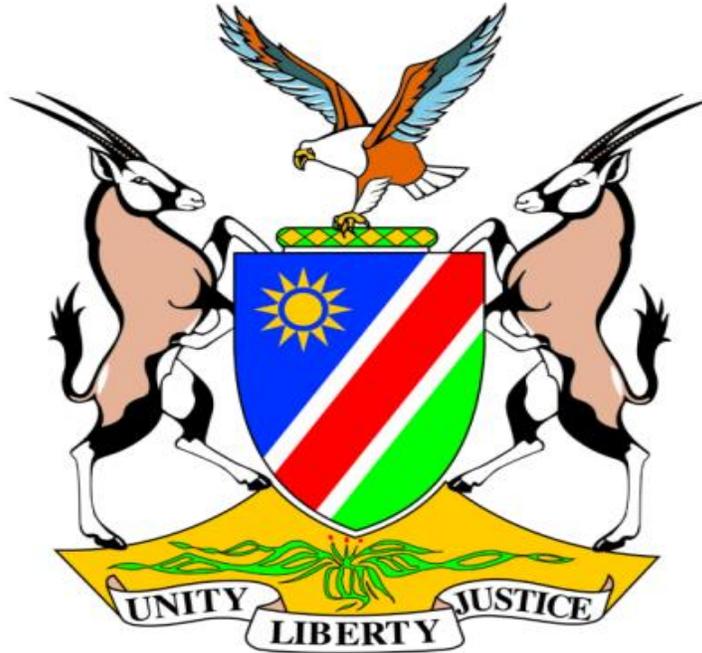


REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. HAGE
GEINGOB, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE
19TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF
TRADITIONAL LEADERS**

OCTOBER 10, 2016

MUNICIPALITY SHOW HALL, KEETMANSHOOP

Check Against Delivery

Director of Ceremonies;

**Esteemed Chairperson of the Council of
Traditional Leaders, Omukwaniilwa Immanuel
Kauluma Elifas, in absentia;**

**Esteemed Deputy Chairperson of the Council
of Traditional Leaders, Gaob Immanuel
/Gâseb;**

Esteemed Traditional Leaders;

**Hon. Sophia Shaningwa, Minister of Urban
and Rural Development;**

**Other Hon. Ministers and Deputy Ministers
present;**

Hon. Members of Parliament;

**Hon. Lucia Basson, Governor of //Karas
Region;**

Other Honourable Governors present;

**Her Worship Councillor Gaudentia Kröhné,
Mayor of Keetmanshoop Town;**

**Honourable Regional and Local Authority
Councilors;**

Distinguished invited guests;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

**I am pleased to join our esteemed traditional
authorities this morning, to officially open the
19th Annual Meeting of the Council of
Traditional Leaders.**

**This year marks the 26th year since the birth of
the Republic of Namibia. Our Namibian House
was born from the blood, sweat and tears of**

our elders and built on the pillars of democracy, peace and tranquility to safeguard the well-being of every Namibian as well as all our visitors. It is in this context, that Namibia remains one of the countries that ultimately recognizes the its Constitution as a supreme law. Therefore, we can proudly say that our Constitution is the bedrock of our democracy.

For the purposes of executing our duties in a collective approach, the Council of Traditional Leaders was established by the Act of Parliament in pursuant to Article 102 (5) of the Namibian Constitution to advise the President of the Republic of Namibia on the control and utilization of communal land and on all such

other matters as may be referred to it by the President for advice.

It is on the basis of such a constitutional provision, that we are gathered here today to engage one another on issues of common interest, which most particularly affect our traditional communities in all aspects of development.

As traditional leaders, you are greatly valued and still hold important roles in this modern era since you form an integral part of a stable and well-functioning Namibian family. You are paramount in maintaining social order and promoting the development and advancement of people within rural communities. You

achieve this in several ways which include the preservation and promotion of local customs, providing advice, settling disputes, speaking up for others and providing spiritual council.

Traditional leaders manage to keep order in communities and assist in the deliverance of public goods and services in seriously challenging situations. This has been evident during the past several years that our country has grappled with incessant episodes of floods and drought. Your effectiveness in helping government function and local regions develop can therefore never be overlooked.

Most importantly, you are bestowed with responsibilities to unite our people in the spirit of one Namibia one Nation not necessarily by looking into one's tribal lineage.

As you are aware, we have adopted a new narrative in Namibia. A narrative centered on building a sense of unity. Today we talk of One Namibia, One Nation – The Namibian House – No Namibian Should Feel Left Out and Harambee. This new narrative is deemed important because Namibia is being threatened by certain sectors of the public who have become bored with peace and are keen on creating an atmosphere of distrust in which they hope that people will retreat into tribal silos.

Such a situation is a threat to the progress we have made as a nation. It is a threat to the foundation of peace started by the Founding Father Comrade Sam Nujoma, consolidated by Comrade Hifikepunye Pohamba and carried forward by Yours Truly, towards an era of prosperity. As a President tasked with carrying this nation forward with an overwhelming mandate, I cannot sit back and allow Namibia to slip down the slippery slope of disunity and return to the Bantustan era, for it has been said, *“Man maintains his balance, poise, and sense of security only as he is moving forward.”* Therefore, as Namibians we can only maintain the balance, poise and security of Namibia, the country we call home, by moving forward as one, pulling together in the same direction in the spirit of Harambee.

Our people therefore expect our traditional leaders to take the lead to accentuate the ethos of this new narrative of the Namibian House. You need to lead by example, so that every village, every homestead, every individual, in every corner of Namibia becomes an advocate of unity. Like I have said before, there is nothing wrong with being proud of one's culture or tribe. The problem arises when one starts putting the suffix ism at the end of tribe to create tribalism. There is nothing wrong with being proud of your race but once you put the ism at the end it becomes racism, which is poisonous to society. All these isms form the antithesis of the concept of the Namibian House and the spirit of Harambee, which are the pillars of our new narrative.

As Government, we are intent on moving the country forward, and we see our Traditional leaders as part and parcel of this process. We have declared all-out war on poverty and corruption and have not wasted any time on making progress on all fronts through initiatives such as the Food Bank and the asset declaration of the President and all Ministers, to name a few. I would like to encourage you, as men and women of honour and respect in your communities, to join the war against all forms of poverty and corruption that may exist in your spheres of influence.

I am confident that the people of the Land of the Brave will overcome all scourges that aim to hinder our march forward, just as those

brave freedom fighters who fought for our liberation overcame the shackles of colonial oppression. We have a plan in place, informed by our new narrative, called the Harambee Prosperity Plan. This is our roadmap to accelerated growth and development, and as Traditional leaders, you are an integral component that will facilitate the success of this plan, most specifically under the pillar of Social Progression, given the important roles you play in our communities.

For us to see this plan through to fruition, we need to ensure that every Namibian in our House is ready to be productive and pull in the same direction. There are a number of threats to our progress though and one of these

threats is the high number of fatalities on our roads which results in the loss of the lives of some of the most productive members of our society.

The situation in our public roads has become critical and as we draw nearer to the end of the year, the anxiety continues to grow amongst all road users. Government, in collaboration with the private sector has undertaken many initiatives in order to raise the awareness levels of road users in the hope of curbing road accidents. Most of these motor vehicle accidents are caused by lack of consideration for our fellow women, men and children, through unnecessary risk taking and excessive

speeding, sometimes under the influence of alcohol.

Let me call upon our traditional leaders to join us in our fight to curb the number and frequency of road accidents by engaging motorists in your communities and encouraging them to change their lifestyles and behavior.

In the same vein, let us also be cautious and change our approach to issues concerning land. Land is an emotive issue and if not handled correctly, has the potential to cause complete disarray in our country. Community disputes over communal land and over chieftainship succession have unfortunately

become too common and present a concern not only to the members of those communities, but to Government as well. Government is spending more money to investigate these disputes while traditional communities involved in these disputes often fail to cooperate with Government in finding solutions thereto. Let us meet each other half way. Let us put personal ambition aside and think how we can help our neighbor and the poor members of our communities. I call upon our leaders to maintain peace within their traditional communities in order to minimize disputes. There can be no Harambee whereh there is selfishness and prioritization of personal ambitions.

I wish to re-affirm the commitment of the Government to the promotion and recognition of the pivotal role of institution of traditional leadership and customary law, and that the Government will continue to provide the necessary support and environment that will enhance the capacity of traditional leaders to effectively understand and carry out their roles to govern the communities under leadership more efficiently.

I would like to encourage all those present here today to focus on building the Namibian House. Let that be our priority. Let us see this project through to completion. So let us not focus on what separates us rather let us focus on what brings us together. There is an African

proverb which says, "*He who burns down his house knows why ashes cost a fortune.*" Let us therefore not be the foolish people who burn down our house only to realize that the ashes will cost a fortune, for it is easy to destroy or burn down something but far more difficult and expensive to rebuild.

In conclusion, I wish you all fruitful deliberations and it is now my honour to declare this 19th Annual Meeting of the Council of Traditional Leaders officially opened.