

Remarks by Tom K Alweendo  
Independence Celebration – Ongenga Constituency  
21 March 20126

First, I would like to thank the Ongenga Constituency Councilor, Hon. Haimudi, for having invited me to address you today. As we all know, today is one of the most important dates in Namibia. Today is the day Namibia became an independent country some 26 years ago – the day when we became masters of our own destiny.

At times we may think that 26 years is not a long time, especially when we compare that time with some of the countries that became independent for a much longer time. Some even more than 100 hundred years. However, when compared to a lifespan of a human being, a 26-year old is regarded as an adult. Therefore we are not that young anymore.

We also know that the road to independence – the road we travelled to independence was not an easy one. Those who colonized us did not want to leave this country – they had no intention of loosening their grips on our country. The only reason why the colonizers eventually left is only because of the bravery the Namibians have shown – our determination to be an independent country. It is this respect that we need to remember the brave sons and daughters of this land – the likes of Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma, Kaxumba kaNdola, Hendrik Witbooi, Toivo yaToivo, Hifikepunye Pohamba, and many others. It is because of their bravery we are free today.

While celebrating this day, we must also remember that there are many sons and daughters of our liberation struggle that are not here with us today. Those are the heroes and heroines whose blood sustains our freedom. They died for our freedom. I am especially aware that during the war of liberation there is no household in the Northern Regions that has not been affected. I would therefore like to request that we all rise and observe a moment of silence in their memories.

We are now in an independent Namibia – in an independent Namibia where we are the ones responsible for determining our future. When celebrating our independence, it augurs well for us to sit back for introspection. For example, now that we are

independent, what difference does it make? What were our expectations? Are those expectations being met? As a free Namibian, what is my responsibility to maintain the freedom we gained? In my view, these are some of the issues we need to reflect on as part of our celebration.

One thing that we all need to be aware of – and also to be thankful for – is the fact that because of the independence we now have peace and stability. I would like to think that we all know how important peace and stability are. Without peace and stability it is impossible to progress. Without peace and stability, we cannot develop. We are familiar with some countries that obtained their independence much earlier than us. However because of lack of peace and stability in those countries, they failed to progress. They failed to develop. It is therefore important for all of us to appreciate the fact that we are able to develop our country while enjoying peace and stability. While it is true that peace and stability are not sufficient conditions to develop and progress, we should note that they are necessary conditions for our progress.

In order for us to promote the sustenance of our democracy – and therefore the promotion of peace and stability – we have adopted a Constitutional provision that mandates us to have national elections every five years. This is an opportunity for us to elect our political leaders of our choice. Since independence we have had six national elections where in all such elections the electorates gave a mandate to the Swapo Party to govern this country.

It is my contention that, without any doubt, Namibia today is a better place to live in for many Namibians. Over the years we have made steady progress in developing our country. Those of you who are here today and were adults at independence, should be able to recognize the difference between Namibia of today and the Namibia of yesterday. You would recall that – especially in the Northern Regions, that we did not have infrastructure such as roads, electricity and potable water. Education and health facilities were scarce commodities.

Today is different. We now have tarred roads; we have electricity in our villages; we have potable water in our rural constituencies; we have expanded our education and health facilities. We therefore need to be proud about our achievements.

While we ought to be proud of our achievement, we should also recognize that we still have a number of development challenges that are still confronting us. However, with the kind of an illustrious achievement over the last 25 years, we have clearly demonstrated that we have what it takes to address the development challenges still facing us. I see no reason, therefore, why we should not be able to join the ranks of developed economies in the next fourteen years – the time remaining to achieve our development goals under V2030. As testimony to this, our President, His Excellency Dr Hage G. Geingob has declared an all-out war on poverty and bring prosperity to the Namibian Nation.

Going forward, we all need to take part in our development. I also want us to know that in order for us to make progress in developing our country, there is a need for us to cultivate the right sets of societal values – values that are conducive to building our desired future. For example, we need to nurture a society that believes in our ability to achieve great things. A society that is not afraid to think big and not prepared to listen to those who tell us that it cannot be done.

We need to build a society that is not too satisfied with a status quo - not always contented with things as they are today but also prepared to think about how things can be tomorrow. To inspire a culture that is less obsessed with instant gratification that in all likelihood will undermine our long-term potential. To cherish a culture that believes that our existence – individually and collectively - cannot change without taking some personal responsibility and risk in acting. And that doing nothing may well be the biggest risk one can ever take. Without these values our efforts to build a great future will yield less than optimal results.

Let us also be prepared to change things where change is needed. It is of no use for us to keep repeating what we have been doing even when the results of our actions are

less than optimal. Albert Einstein once said that “insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results”. Let sanity prevail over insanity.

I would like to conclude by saying that Namibia is not an ordinary country. Namibia is an extraordinary country capable of extraordinary things. Let us all be part of the team that is ready to deliver extraordinary things.

I thank you.