

**REMARKS BY TOM K ALWEENDO, DIRECTOR GENERAL, NPC
AT THE LAUNCH OF THE NATIONAL HUMAN RESOURCES PLAN
WINDHOEK, 14 MAY 2013**

Director of Ceremonies
Hon Ministers
Members of the Diplomatic Community
All Distinguished Invited Guests

I would like to thank all of you for having accepted our invitation to attend this function this morning. This morning we are launching the long anticipated National Human Resources Plan.

The 21st century is a critical time period for Africa's economic development. We are well aware of a changing international attitude towards the continent. Today we are reading of newspaper headlines such as "Africa the hopeful Continent"; "Africa Rising". This is in stark contrast to headlines such as "Africa the hopeless Continent" or "Africa the Dark Continent" of only 13 years ago. Many African economies are preparing themselves to take advantage of the renewed positive sentiments about the continent. Namibia is not an exception in this respect where the Government has put in place plans and strategies to build a sustainable economic future.

As Namibians we ought to be aware of our good achievements since independence against some odds. At independence there were many people who did not believe in our capability to effectively manage our own affairs. Today Namibia has joined the rest of the world where the rule of law is well entrenched; where human rights are respected and social justice prevail; and where the economy is stable. These are all characteristics of a rising Nation – and therefore part of the rising and hopeful Africa.

While we certainly ought to be happy with our achievements, we cannot be too satisfied knowing that we are still being faced by some formidable challenges. For example, we still have too many Namibians searching for employment opportunities that are not available; we are still faced with an economy with a stagnant production capacity; our economic competitiveness is being eroded; and we don't have enough skills needed for the 21st century economy. These are some of the issues we need to continue to address if we want to be an integral part of the rising and hopeful Africa.

While we need to recognize the complexities of our challenges, let us also take comfort in knowing that our current challenges are not intractable. They can be addressed successfully. What we need to have is a plan how to go about addressing our challenges and the strong will to implement the plan. The good news is that we do have a plan in place - our long-term vision, V2030. In addition to V2030, we also have our

short-to-medium term implementation strategy through our five-year national development plans. As with regard to the strong will to implement our plans, I am of a view that as Namibians we still need to cultivate a mindset of possibilities. We need to nurture an attitude of self-belief and steadfastness.

Of late when scanning the news media, one gets the impression that we have become too cynical about our ability to address our development challenges. What one often reads in our newspapers is more often than not about what cannot work or what has failed; as opposed to what is possible and what has worked. We are ready to give up too easily at the slightest sign of a setback or criticism. To be sure, some of our plans or strategies – both Government and private sector – will yield fewer results than expected. But this cannot be a valid reason why we should not try new ideas, as long as we are prepared to learn from lessons learned. As a rising and hopeful African country, there is an urgent need for all of us to embrace new ideas and to accept that taking calculated risk is a necessary part of a successful development strategy. We need a renewed optimism that says that V2030 is within our reach.

It is said that *"it's hard to argue against cynics - they always sound smarter than optimists because they have so much evidence on their side"*. I am quite aware that it will take more than optimism to solve all our challenges; but I am equally convinced that optimism combined with pragmatism will make a huge difference between success and failure.

I also like to make the point that development is not the role of Government alone. Our development efforts will succeed only if and when all stakeholders are participating positively in all our development endeavors. As stakeholders, we have no choice but to undertake our development journey together as smart partners who have everything to lose if we do not succeed.

You may recall that when we launched NDP4 last July, as part of the Plan we highlighted what we called basic enablers. The basic enablers are those factors that are necessary for development to take place. One of the basic enabler is education and skills.

It is not possible for any economy to develop without the relevant skills. The Government has realized this fact long back and that is why since independence our education sector received the biggest share of our national budget. There is also now ample empirical evidence that economic growth is not only driven by the “invisible” hand of the markets. Government policies have an important role to play in determining the long-run growth rate of the economy. Specifically, education and skills have been recognized as important contributors to economic growth. Workers are likely to be more

productive when they are appropriately skilled; and education affects economic growth by leading to the creation of new knowledge and innovation.

Not only is education important for economic growth. It is education that lifts people out of the state of poverty in which they constantly struggle to fulfil their basic needs. Our recent statistics confirmed this where most unemployed and poor Namibians are those with little or no education.

Our institutions of learning must also realise that it is no longer enough to provide education as a social service. This is so because the world has changed so dramatically over the last two and half decades, where nations have now to compete in the world market where competition is so fierce and only the fittest survive. The fittest are those equipped with the necessary skills that enable them to innovate.

Notwithstanding our efforts with regard to education and skills, there is broad consensus that our education system is still not on par with that of some of the fast growing developing economies. The gaps in our education system can be broadly grouped into two categories, namely the quality of our education system output and the mismatch between the demand for and supply of skills.

The National Human Resources Plan that is being launched today is meant to document and highlight the mismatch between the demand for and the supply of skills. The Plan has certainly identified mismatches between the skills that are needed in the economy and the skills that the education system is providing. The Plan has also a forecasting component where future skills needs are projected. What is now required is for the education sector, led by the Ministry of Education, to ensure that those mismatches are being addressed. That will require that our education institutions adapt their syllabuses to fit the economy's need for skills.

It is now my pleasure to declare the National Human Resources Plan officially launched and available to the public for information and action.