

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
BY TOM K ALWEENDO (MP)
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
WINDHOEK
14 JULY 2016**

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Members,

I rise before this august House to make a Ministerial statement on the forthcoming National Development Plan, NDP5.

Since our independence more than 26 years ago, our Swapo-led Government's development focus can be classified in three main strategies. The first strategy was to invest in the people. Given our past history of segregated development, we needed to invest in the education and health of the people. It is therefore not a coincidence that since independence our budgetary allocation to both education and health has been the highest in the SADC region.

The second strategy was to nurture a value of a caring society. Through this strategy over the years the Government has been providing a social safety net to the most vulnerable members of our society. These are the elderly, the orphans and those living with disabilities. In our 2016/17 budget N\$3.3bn has been allocated to this strategy as compared to N\$790mn ten years back - an increase of over 300%. Over the same period the monthly old-age pension grant increased from N\$370 to N\$1100.00, representing an increase of 197%.

The third strategy was that of investing in economic infrastructure and the growth of the economy. Today our development budget amounts to N\$9.1bn compared to N\$2.1bn ten years ago - an increase of over 300%. The result is that today our economic infrastructure compares relatively well in the SADC region. Since independence the size of our economy has grown 16-fold to N\$126bn. Namibia is equally now being seen as a beacon of hope and good governance on the Continent.

There is no doubt that the three strategies I just described have produced tangible results. Today Namibia is certainly a better place to live in for most Namibians than it was before. For example our human development index as compiled by the UNDP has been improving over the years. The index was created by the UN to emphasize that people and their capabilities should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the true development of a country, and not only economic growth.

I must hasten to add that our achievements that I have described above are not to say that we have reached the pinnacle of our development. It is not to say that we no longer have areas of our development where more need to be done. There is no denying the fact that our economy still need to grow at a higher level and be more inclusive; that we need to create more employment opportunities, especially for the young people; that income generated from our economy need to be shared on a more equitable basis among members of our society; that we need to pay more particular attention to the quality of our education system where innovation must be at the core of our focus.

However, I still believe that it is important to talk about our past achievement in order to remind ourselves that we are capable of achieving great things. It is to say to ourselves that no challenge is too big to overcome provided that we are prepared and committed to confront and overcome such challenges. When faced by such challenges, we don't have the luxury of a business-as-usual approach. We no longer have the option to tinker around the edges of our development challenges. Our approach need to change from that of preservation and appeasement to that of transformation - an approach where the status quo is simply no longer an option.

We therefore still have a journey ahead of us – a journey during which some of us might become fatigued and start to despair. Already there are some among us who have become cynical about our ability to achieve great things. Their starting point is to always remind us of what has not happened and conveniently remain silent about what has happened. For them it is to emphasize failure and disregard success. Instead of recognizing the greatness in our ability to make things happen, they would rather concentrate on what has failed.

It is almost as if they have forgotten that the world successes and breakthroughs that we are all so proud of today - such as the invention of the light bulb or the internet - were not achieved by those who were afraid to fail or criticized. The simple truth is that no great success was ever achieved without failure. We must therefore look at our failure as a necessary stepping stone to achieving our dreams - and not as a deterrent not to try again. On our journey the real solutions can therefore not come from the cynics among us, but from those that are prepared to face the uncertainty of the future and willing to overcome their fear of failure.

We have started with the planning of our development journey for the next five year. As we are aware, our current five-year development plan, NDP4, is coming to an end next March. One of the most important lessons we have learned over the years is that a plan is an effective development tool only when the potential beneficiaries have helped to shape such a plan. We have also learned that plan implementation is more effective

only when those who are responsible for the implementation have had a fair share of putting the plan together. That is why we have decided to go to all the fourteen Regions to hear and share views of potential beneficiaries of our next five-year national development plan, NDP5.

It is our desire that at the end of the process, we will have a plan that is relevant, realistic, practical and most of all, a plan which Namibians will identify with, support and work towards making a reality. We wish for a plan that is informed by facts and logic – a plan developed with careful thought and not blinkered by the past. While it is important to be guided by the past, it is equally more important to be rooted in the realities of present possibilities and be driven by our vision of a Namibia that stands tall on the global stage – a Namibia where each and every citizen is afforded a fair opportunity to achieve her or his potential.

I am a firm believer that we are capable of extraordinary things. His Excellency the President has unambiguously demonstrated a strong political will to transform our socio-economic landscape into something all of us will be proud of. He has set the right tone where he underscored the importance of accountability and transparency. We all know that accountability and transparency build trust and that trust is a necessary ingredient in the transformation process. Without trust our efforts to transform our socio-economic landscape and to create prosperity will be less successful.

The President has also been telling us about how we need to build a Namibian House where no one feels left out. He also explained to us that in order to deliver the prosperity to the Namibian people, we all need to pull together and in the same direction.

Let me end my remarks with a quote that says that “*Everybody wants to be a diamond, but very few are willing to get cut*”. If we want to be a great and prosperous Nation – and I am sure we all want to be - we must be prepared to do things that are regarded unorthodox by some people. It will be necessary for us to do what others may regard as unconventional. Let us also know that we cannot become successful without encountering some adversities along the way.

Therefore in the very spirit of Harambee, let us all be the active agents of the changes we want to see in our next National Development Plan, NDP5.

I thank you.