

## REMARKS BY TOM K ALWEENDO, DIRECTOR GENERAL, NPC NPD4 LAUNCH, WINDHOEK, 19 JULY 2012

His Excellency President Hifikepunye Pohamba  
The Right Honorable Nahas Angula  
The Honorable Speaker of the National Assembly  
The Honorable Chairperson of the National Council  
Members of Parliament  
Excellences Members of the Diplomatic Corps  
Distinguished Invited Guests  
Members of the Media  
Fellow Namibians

Today is an important day as we launch our fourth national development plan. Today is equally an inspiring day; it is a day on which we re-assure ourselves that V2030 is certainly achievable. Our fourth development plan is driven by a deep concern that things are not what they ought to be and by the desire to construct a sustainable economic future.

For over 22 years now we have been on a journey to nationhood and since then we have achieved a number of milestones many of our detractors thought impossible. Many of our critics did not give us much of a chance to successfully manage a modern economy, except that we did. Many did not believe that we were capable to effectively address the many apartheid legacies that we inherited then, but we proved them wrong. Today Namibia is a well-established multi-party democracy based on the rule of law, and characterized by peace and stability. We are all aware of the harmful consequences of the alternative to peace and stability. We therefore thank and appreciate the pioneering deeds of our leaders in establishing the necessary political and economic institutions we are so proud of today.

It is, however, also equally true that we cannot be too satisfied with our current achievements. That we have far too many of our young people searching for employment opportunities, that are not available, is no longer in dispute. We are all too familiar with dejected faces of young men, especially in our towns and cities, sitting patiently and expectantly at cross roads, eager to be offered any opportunity to work. We are therefore still faced with some formidable challenges.

In his inaugural speech on the 21<sup>st</sup> March 2005, President Pohamba had this to say, and I quote **“I am conscious that peace, security and stability we enjoy today will have to be accompanied by sustainable economic**

**growth, social development, discipline and self-sacrifice. The question of disparity in socio-economic development, unemployment and poverty will be addressed effectively if we transform the Namibian economy and accelerate economic growth.”** Those words are still as pertinent as they were then.

Before we started with the process of developing our fourth five-year plan, we carefully reviewed our planning strategies with a view to improve the effectiveness of our planning. The review was also necessary in order to avoid the perception that our public pronouncements to effectively address our development challenges are mere platitudes meant to pacify our critics. Equally we could not expect different results if we were to continue with the same strategies. Someone once said that if you do what you have always done, you will get what you always got.

While we need to recognize the complexities of our challenges, let us also know that our current challenges are not pre-ordained to us. There is nothing that is natural to us having too many young people looking for jobs they cannot find; there is certainly nothing that suggests that the level of poverty and inequality we have currently is something we cannot change. These are all challenges that we can overcome, provided that we are prepared to do what it takes to solve them.

In addressing our development challenges, let us take an example from those countries that have successfully managed similar challenges that are facing us today; countries that are generating sufficient prosperity for their citizens that we can only admire. What we must also know is that today's developed countries were not always as prosperous as they are today; that at some point in the not too distant past they too were afflicted by the same challenges facing us today.

In order to successfully address our development challenges, our actions need to be characterized by certain principles. Among these principles is the need to be steadfast in our beliefs that it is possible to overcome our current challenges. Let us believe that we can transform our economy into a dynamic economy characterised by new industries. However, it will be naive on our part to believe that we can create new industries that will create new employment opportunities, but at the same time shy away from making the necessary public and private investment.

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 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; sometimes even before we have started. Let us rekindle our optimism and be more resilient in seeing our strategies through.

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 will make a huge difference between success and failure.

The second principle is to be courageous to take certain decisions that, although perceived to be unpopular, are necessary in order to effectively address our challenges. Without the necessary courage to be radical in our thinking and actions, all what is likely to happen is that we will be tinkering around the edges of our development challenges without much success, in the process allowing the problems to become overwhelming.

The third and most crucial principle is to be persistent and not to allow anyone, however important, or anything, to prevent us from fully implementing our development plans. This principle suggests therefore that we must strictly hold each other accountable for our actions or inactions with regard to the implementation of our plans. For example, it should no longer be an acceptable behavior to have some civil servants who are more interested in furthering their private economic interest instead of providing quality public service to our citizens. We should all reject mediocre performance from those we have entrusted with certain public responsibilities.

Without these principles firmly entrenched in all our behaviours and actions, the achievement of V2030 will be delayed. While contemplating all these issues, we should also know that time is not on our side. Postponing the achievement of V2030 goals is therefore not an option. I am here reminded by someone who once said that an unrealized vision quickly becomes a nightmare. Anyone who has experienced a nightmare can testify that it is an unpleasant experience that causes strong negative emotional responses and despair.

It is also time we avoid, as some of us do, viewing our national development planning as a mere intellectual exercise. While it is certainly true that some intellect is necessary to plan, planning cannot be an end in itself. Our development planning should be about real people out there who are challenged daily by real issues. It should not be about how eloquent our plan is, but more about how to make it possible for those who are looking for jobs to find them. It should be about making it possible for parents to be able to afford the necessary education and health services for their families. It should

be about how to enable low-income earners to afford housing. It should be about how to effectively remove all the constraints to our economic competitiveness, without which we cannot compete with the rest of the world.

For effective implementation, we urge that we all make deliberate efforts that are supported by all role players. By now it should be clear to all of us that Government alone cannot effectively solve our development challenges without the participation of all the role players. Out of necessity we will have to walk this difficult path together as partners who have everything to lose in equal measure if we do not succeed.

As role players and true partners, we can no longer afford to only think about our own narrow interest. As a Government, our role should still be that of creating a conducive environment where private businesses find it profitable to invest in the local economy and thereby create more employment opportunities. In this role, however, and given our level of economic development, the Government need to be more proactive in making the necessary public investment in the economic infrastructure and to continuously embrace reforms that will make our economy becoming globally competitive.

As a private sector, we should recognize that while profit is our overall motive when investing, we also have an obligation to ensure that we build a society based on equal opportunity and the equitable sharing of economic benefits. The emphasis must therefore move away from high profitability above all else, to issues that are equally important for sustainable economic development, and therefore future business profitability. This might well require that businesses consider investing in ventures that might not have the highest return on investment in the short-run; but have the potential to unlock faster economic growth and human development in the long term.

As organized labor, we must also recognize that while we have the duty to protect workers from exploitation, just as all of us are duty-bound not to exploit anyone, we should not forget that we too have a responsibility to make it possible for more employment opportunities to be created. This will require that labor be prepared to make the necessary compromises required to make it possible for the private sector to create more jobs. Here we, as partners and stakeholders, need a candid dialogue to ensure that our legal framework strikes a good balance between economic efficiency and labour protection. All these are possible, ladies and gentlemen, only if we start to regard ourselves as true partners who are motivated by one thing only - and that is to make Namibia a better place to live for all our citizens.

The goals of NDP4 cannot be realized unless we make the necessary public investment. In this respect I am aware that there are those who are anxious

about the affordability of the proposed public investment. They caution against high budget deficits that will lead to an unsustainable public debt. Unsustainable debt, they argue, will erode our macroeconomic stability that we were able to painstakingly build over the years and that must be treasured.

These are legitimate concerns that cannot be ignored. I therefore want to assure you that one of the principles underpinning the formulation of NDP4 is the maintenance of our macroeconomic stability, without which it will be impossible to achieve the set targets. What is equally true is that in the long-run we cannot resolve the problem of unsustainable debt and deficits without a credible economic growth strategy. In the long-run it is only sustainable economic growth that is capable of successfully addressing the twin problem of deficit and public debt.

Before I conclude my remarks, I would like to sincerely thank all those who, in one way or other, were involved in making NDP4 a reality in a record time. This assignment has proven beyond any doubt that there are many Namibians out there who are prepared to share their time and expertise – even for free. I especially want to thank Dr John Steytler, who led a team of officials from the National Planning Commission, the Ministry of Finance, the Bank of Namibia and individuals from the private sector, in the preparation of the Plan. I also want to thank Mr Daniel Bagwitz of GIZ for his valuable contribution to the process. Last but not least, I would like to appreciate the Chamber of Mines, Old Mutual and the UNDP for making financial resources available.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me conclude by saying this - ultimately it all starts and ends with all of us as Namibians. As individuals and as a collective, let us therefore recognize the great potential that is within all of us to make a difference. The time is now for all of us to act with self-belief and to also act differently. Let us not allow our destiny to be determined for us by events happening around us. We owe this not only to ourselves but more importantly to the future generation.