

**REMARKS BY TOM ALWEENDO  
AT THE NAMIBIAN EMPLOYERS' FEDERATION  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 11 APRIL 2012**

I would like to thank the Namibia Employers' Federation for inviting me to address your Annual General Meeting. I thought that I will do is to share with you some highlights of our next five-year development plan, NDP4. I also wish to talk about the importance of true partnership between Government and the private sector; the importance of skills development; and will conclude my remarks with some views on the role of employers in our development agenda.

*Highlights of NDP4*

The current five-year plan, NPD3, has come to an end in March 2012. We are therefore in the final stages of formulating the next plan, NDP4. In that regard we have had consultations with various stakeholders and some of you in this room today might have been consulted as well already.

Over the past years the National Development Plans have been used as instruments to achieve our goals under Vision 2030 of becoming a prosperous and industrialised nation. While we have recorded a number of important achievements in the past 22 years as a young nation, we are well aware that we still need to do much more if we are to achieve our V2030 goals. What is also clear is that we cannot afford to continue with the same approach and expect to get different results.

For example, the current thinking is that in the past we might have tried to do too much at once and as a result did not focus on what should have been our urgent priorities. As a result our attention and the necessary resources were thinly spread of many and varied programs. We have therefore decided that in order to achieve the overall goals of becoming a prosperous and industrialised nation, there are certain things that must be done first. That requires that we need to be clear on the sequencing of the intervening milestones that will take us closer to the overall goals as outlined in Vision 2030.

It is for that reason that we decided that NDP4 will focus on fewer goals, namely achieving high and sustained economic growth, job creation and the reduction in income inequality. This year's plan will also depart from previous development plans in the sense that it will be developed in two phases. Phase one will set the strategic direction and will be a high level document. Phase two will focus on sectorial implementation plans. This is necessary to allow an annual sectorial review of what must be done and obtain the necessary alignment with the budgetary allocation.

NDP4 has set out strategic areas that need to be improved in order to move the country forward. Among these are the economic competitiveness, institutional capacity

development, education and skills development, health, industry development, development of economic infrastructure and the improvement of our execution and monitoring.

While contemplating NDP4 we asked also ourselves what kind of an economy we would like to have in the future. What is it that we want to be known for as an economy? Looking at our geographic comparative advantage we decided to become a regional leader in logistics and distribution. Therefore it is our aim for NDP4 to lay the foundations for Namibia to become a regional and logistics hub for the SADC Region.

This will be achieved through the expansion of the Walvis Bay Port and improving our road and rail transportation. The targeting and support to potential sectors, as currently done through TIPEEG, will continue throughout the NDP4 period. Additionally, to become an industrialised economy we need to invest in establishing industries. There will be an intensification of effort by the Government, in corroboration with the private sector, to establish certain industries. In this respect, we spent a lot of time discussing as to who and how to pick “winners”. We came to a conclusion that suggests that there are no “winners” out there. What is out there are opportunities to create “winners”.

#### *Importance of partnership*

There is a need to improve the partnership between Government and the private sector. Too often when the question is asked whether we are likely to achieve Vision 2030 the usual assumption is that the Government is either failing or has failed all together. Developing a country is no easy task and it should be clear to all of us that Government alone cannot solve all the developmental problems facing us as a country. Yes, the Government has certain responsibilities and obligations to fulfil; but so do all of us.

Government relies on business to invest and grow the economy that is able to generate taxes that the Government needs. Business in turn depends on the Government to create the regulatory environment that is conducive to doing business. We therefore need to work together because Government shapes the rules of the economic game and business activity takes place within it. It is only through this partnership that the much needed trust can be created so that the different interests of Government and the private sector can be taken into consideration.

What is required is a true partnership among all stakeholders that is based on mutual trust and rooted in our collective desire to prosper as a nation. We need to view our achievement and challenges as our collective responsibility and not that of the Government alone. That is because both Government and the private sector, as partners, have everything to lose in equal measure if we do not succeed in our developmental efforts.

### *Importance of skills in our development agenda*

The role of skills in our development agenda cannot be underestimated. Education is certainly an important catalyst to economic growth and us achieving Vision 2030. It is also very clear that without the right kind of education the economy will not grow and we will remain a developing economy. There is a consensus that there is a mismatch between the demand for skilled personnel in the economy and the supply of the needed skills. It is therefore necessary to have a comprehensive human resource development plan that assesses the demand of human resources and the extent to which our education sector is able to meet that demand.

To that regard the National Planning Commission is in the final stages of completing an occupational supply and demand model that will enable human resource planners to project the demand and supply for various occupations across all the sectors of the economy over the next 15 years. This plan will obviously not be cast in stone as any economic structure will always be dynamic and change with time. The thing we however need to get right is to ensure that our education is of high quality and is sufficiently flexible to be able to change course when needed.

All in all, people are the ultimate resource of a nation. Therefore, development becomes impossible if the people are not adequately skilled and educated. The world has also changed to such an extent that international borders hardly exist. Nations now have to compete in the world market where competition is very fierce and only the fittest will survive. We can therefore survive economically only if we equip ourselves with the skills that will enable us to compete effectively with all the other nations; and this requires educated and skilled people. It is not only the responsibility of the public sector to educate and train our people; it should be a joint effort. After all, the private sector has a lot to gain from having a trained and productive workforce.

### *Role of employers in our development agenda*

Government has at many occasions stated and confirmed its position that the private sector should be the engine for economic growth. This is good because Government should be rather creating a sound environment for business instead of operating businesses itself. However, it would also be more beneficial if the private sector is also at the forefront of driving the developmental agenda. Through such efforts we are likely to reach our targets sooner rather than later.

This would naturally mean that the private sector should recognise that while profit is their overall motive when investing, they also have an obligation to ensure that we build a society based on equal opportunity and the fair sharing of economic benefits. In other words, the emphasis must move away from profitability alone to issues that are equally important for sustainability. This will require that business consider investing in ventures that might not yield the highest return on investment in the shortest time, but have the potential to unlock faster economic growth and human development and thereby assuring future private sector profit.

In conclusion, it is important that we all adopt a mind-set of possibilities; an attitude that believes that our current challenges can become real opportunities. I am convinced that together and in true partnership we can overcome our development challenges and achieve Vision 2030. Once again I would like to thank you for inviting me to speak and I wish you a successful meeting.

I thank you