

**REMARKS BY TOM K ALWEENDO, DIRECTOR GENERAL, NPC
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Director of Ceremonies
Delegates

I would like to thank the Secretary of the Swapo Party Youth League, Dr Elija Ngurare for inviting me to address this 5th Congress of the League. Allow me also to congratulate the League for choosing an appropriate theme “*in pursuit of Namibia’s technological and economic revolution*”.

I am indeed excited by the Congress theme because I also believe that without an economic revolution of some sort that is assisted by technology, we are not likely to achieve our goals under V2030. Let us also be clear that in order to win a revolution, three things must be in place. First, you need to be clear about the goals of the revolution. Two, you need to choose the right weapons. Three, you need to be brave otherwise you will not succeed.

It is now over 22 years since we started our journey to nationhood. Since then we have achieved a number of development milestones many of our detractors thought impossible. At independence 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.

I am going to address my assigned topic by taking you through our fourth national development plan that was launched by His Excellency President

Pohamba on the 19th July 2012. NDP4 is all about creating new economic activities that have the greatest potential to create sustainable employment opportunities. Equally NDP4 is concerned about the persisting inequality in how the economic benefits are distributed.

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.

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.

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.

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.