

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

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Windhoek

All Media

His Excellency, President Hage G. Geingob delivers statement and dedicates three hours of the 9 October 2018 Cabinet Session to a post-mortem and review of the resolutions of the recently concluded Second National Land Conference

Full extract of the President's statement:

Vice President, Comrade Mbumba

Prime Minister, Comrade Kuugongelwa-Amadhila

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Comrade Nandi-Ndaitwah

Secretary General of the SWAPO Party, Comrade Shaningwa

Comrade Ministers

Secretary to Cabinet

Good morning to you all

I would like to thank all of you for the manner in which you executed the inclusive Second National Land Conference last week. It was an event that demanded intensive and extensive intergovernmental coordination. Notwithstanding the obstacles we encountered in the final hours, including calls to cancel the Conference, we persevered, weathered the storm, and here we are. The inclusive Second National Land Conference is behind us.

I should thank the Prime Minister, the Land Reform Minister and the Secretary to Cabinet for having worked tirelessly to bring matters to a successful conclusion. Our colleagues deserve to be applauded for that.

Let me caution you – hosting a Conference successfully is not a reason to celebrate. The real work began on Friday evening. As the apex Chamber of Executive Authority, and in your respective capacities as Heads of Ministries, you have your work cutout. By now, you must have started to prepare sectorial plans and responses in line with the resolutions.

An inclusive Conference gave us a mandate to commence the journey of Land Justice with the urgency it deserves. In my closing remarks, which you must internalize, I made it clear that I don't want to hear explanations as to why this or that cannot be done. I don't want to hear about money and bureaucratic delays. The Conference laid challenges bare, and also highlighted the lack of accountability, which has led to high levels of mistrust in what we as Government are doing on the Land Question.

Some of you will ask for more money for this and for that. Not every solution is dependent on financial resources; we must begin to solve problems innovatively by starting with what we have, and learning to do more with less. You can't solve problems by throwing money at

them - when the root cause of the problem is the absence of policy and poor implementation.

There are quick wins and low-hanging fruits that will require determination and not necessarily more money in your budgets.

On Urban Land, I should repeat that the situation in informal settlements constitutes a humanitarian crisis, which should be considered to be an emergency. The available statistics are not flattering, with an estimated close to 900 000 Namibians living in informal settlements. Even if the figure was lower by a hundred thousand or more, the sheer scale of informal settlements undermines the dignity of our fellow citizens.

Cabinet and the line Minister should commence the process of drafting an Urbanization and Spatial Development Policy to deal with the macro-level questions. This should clearly be communicated, with solid time-lines and outcomes. In the meantime, there are four points to be acted upon:

1. The urban poor remain tenure-insecure. The Squatters Proclamation Act threatens those that are tenure-insecure and requires urgent revision. A lesson from the piloted Flexible Land Tenure is that the system has not adequately simplified planning.

This presents us with an opportunity to revise the Act to make it more responsive.

2. The Shack Dwellers Federation and Build Together Programme are complementary in the delivery of ultra-low cost housing. Their impact is however undermined by the low rate of release of land by Local Authorities. A directive should be issued to avail land in Windhoek and other jurisdictions where there is capacity to allow their work to proceed in a manner that complements the work of Government. I also need a proper audit of the Mass Housing Project.
3. Rental stock is sub-standard and overpriced. Rent control will improve affordability and access to shelter for many young Namibians who have been forced to settle in informal settlements and dilapidated dwellings. We should also explore flexible schemes that would allow subsequent purchase as "Rent to Own". I want to hear what the obstacles are in the implementation of Rent Control. If such policies exist in many parts of the world, why are we struggling to protect the vulnerable?
4. I recognize the plight of students in urban centers who have limited access to accommodation in universities. We should accelerate the delivery of the Student Village that is currently in the pipeline with the City of Windhoek as a matter of priority.

With respect to Resettlement, Communal Land, Ancestral Land and Restitution, I am happy to see that we had a discussion that allowed Namibians to air their views. There are also quick wins here. Let me raise four:

1. The dwelling place of Chief Hosea Kutako at Aminius should be declared a National Heritage Site. Furthermore the dwelling place of the late chief should be renovated and a shrine in remembrance of his heroic role towards the Namibian struggle should be erected. The Ministry of Land Reform must identify a farm or two adjacent to Aminius to lessen pressure for land in the Aminius communal area. In the same vein the Okahandja Cemetery should be renovated, and key graves be upgraded to National Monuments. A Task Team should be set-up to identify a few historic shrines from communities who were dispossessed for construction of memorial sites. The principle of inclusivity must be adhered to in all our undertakings.

I will announce in due course a Commission that will look into the matter of Ancestral Land and Restitution. It is critical that the Terms of Reference of the Commission are well crafted to guide the work of the Commission to be focused on the tasks at hand. The work of such a Commission should be evidence-based and enriched by international experience on this matter. A retired

Judge or eminent person supported by 5 experts in relevant fields with secretarial support from the Law Reform and Development Commission and the Presidency will head the Commission. In this regard, the Attorney General in consultation with the Minister in the Presidency is directed to come up with draft Terms of Reference, and proposed candidates to be appointed as Commissioners. This must be submitted to me by 16 October 2018.

I was moved by depth of skills of Namibians at the Second National Land Conference and I have no doubt that we will be able to appoint a formidable and inclusive team to the Commission. We may also enrich the team with foreign expertise in an advisory capacity. On the whole, I urge OMAs to work very closely with available expertise in our institutions of Higher Learning. We have skills here and should not run to costly consultant elsewhere.

2. We must urgently make Government owned land more productive. The willing-buyer-willing seller is now in suspension. For a start the focus should be on land where Namibians have already be resettled. The Ministry of Land Reform together with the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry is tasked to carry out an urgent assessment of the status of resettlement farms and what it will be required to improve productivity. Where there is not

enough water, lets us provide water. Where there is not sufficient agricultural equipment and seeds let us see what we can do to turn around the situation. I challenge you to ensure that farm Ongombo West be turned around from its current status, to again start exporting flowers to Europe. Through partnering with skilled commercial farmers, and the setting up of a cooperative this can be done. The Full Resettlement List should be completed and shared with the Namibian public.

3. We can no longer afford to deprive Northern Communal Farmers from wealth creation by leveraging on their land and livestock. The Ministry of Agriculture must accelerate completion and renovation of abattoirs as well as construction of additional abattoirs in places such as Eenhana, Rundu, and Katima Mullilo. Finance should use the powers vested in it by the Procurement Act to accelerate directives that will allow farmers north of the cordon fence to provide beef and crops for consumption in Government Owned Entities north of the redline. Those amendments should take effect before the end of this year. Let us also see how we can exit from existing contracts that were entered into based on criteria in the bidding documents that effectively excluded northern communal farmers from participating in procurement of beef from consumption by Government Owned Entities.

4. A Government that cannot enforce laws or observe the rule of law is not sustainable. The Ministry of Safety and Security should commence the task of enforcing laws prohibiting illegal fencing in communal areas. A sensitization and consultation process should start before law enforcement agencies move swiftly to enforce the law without fear or favor. By the end of this month, all illegal fences should be identified and notice given to those committing the illegal act of fencing areas to remove their fences within a reasonable timeframe.

In conclusion, I should remind you that we need more dialogue with our fellow citizens, and this implies communication about your Ministerial activities in general, and specifically on the question of Land. You have to go out, explain on Radio, on TV and other media channels what your respective Ministries and Offices are doing. In light of the commitments we have made, and the seriousness with which we are going to engage the question of Land Justice, there must be regular feedback to our communities and the nation.

All of us must hold hands, proceed with urgency, and avoid excuses, and explanations as to why things cannot be done.

I thank you

ISSUED BY:

/End

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