

THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



THE PRESIDENCY

**REMARKS/TALKING POINTS BY H.E NETUMBO NANDI-
NDAITWAH, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
NAMIBIA ON THE OCCASION OF DR. HAGE G. GEINGOB
MEMORIAL LECTURE UNDER THE THEME, "*HIS LEGACY
LIVES ON*"**

ONGWEDIVA, OSHANA REGION

08 JUNE 2024

***President Hage G. Geingob: A Crusader For an Effective
Governance Architecture in Namibia***

**Honorable Elia Irimari, Governor of the Oshana Region
and Co-Convener of this Memorial Lecture;
Honorable Ministers and Deputy Ministers present;
Honorable Governors present from other regions;
Honorable Members of the Namibian Parliament;
Honorable Chairperson of the Oshana Regional Council;
Honorable Regional Councillors;
Esteemed Traditional Leaders;
Distinguished invited guests;
Students of the Jose Eduardo Dos Santos Campus;
Esteemed Members of the media;
Ladies and gentlemen;**

1. INTRODUCTION

I thank the organizers of this important memorial lecture, which I am confident will be the beginning of a series of events that will honor and immortalize the rich legacy of leadership by the third President of the Republic of Namibia and the third President of the SWAPO Party, His Excellency Dr. Hage G. Geingob. In the morning of the 4th of February 2024, President Geingob left us in the most abrupt manner and none of us were

prepared for the void that he has left in our hearts and minds. We are now left with memories and the profound footprint Comrade Geingob left in what he passionately conceptualized as the Namibian House - a Namibian House in which no one should feel left out.

The ideas, the deeds and the indelible footprints of President Geingob, which oblige us to convene here, are a powerful testimonial of a life of courage, sacrifice and a life well-lived, in service of the Namibian people, Africa and humanity at large. It is indeed fitting that we are laying the bricks that will ensure that *"His Legacy Lives On"* as the theme of this memorial lecture intends to do.

You will agree with me that it is hard to find an entry point for a discussion about the legacy of President Geingob. Various questions come to mind. Where should we start? How do we narrow down the legacy of a leader who started his journey as a freedom fighter, a petitioner to the United Nations and later SWAPO Party Director of Elections in 1989? Should we start with his journey on the eve of independence as the consensual Chairperson of the Constituent Assembly or as an effective Founding Prime Minister of an independent

Namibia? Or should I limit my reflections to his courageous and scholarly tenure as President of our Republic, which was shortly interrupted on the 4th of February. Irrespective of where we start and end, in all these roles, President Geingob made seminal contributions, which merit memorialization of his work in service of Namibia and humanity at large.

History and the various theories of presidential leadership have shown that there is no common pattern that describes trajectories of leadership.¹ However, as we reflect on the legacy of President Geingob, we should agree that leaders are born and they are made to enlarge the opportunities and lives of others. Yes, we have to agree that President Geingob was born a leader. Additionally, the prevailing circumstances in Apartheid occupied Namibia and the context of the liberation struggle unquestionably shaped his beliefs and practice of leadership. He put these practices of leadership, the innate and the learned to great use in the exercise of governing Namibia.

¹ See Doris Kearns Goodwin. *Leadership In Turbulent Times*. Simon and Schuster, 2018

2. MAIN ARGUMENT

Within the time that has been allocated to me, I will limit my reflections about the heritage of President Geingob to two perspectives, which became firmly anchored in his Presidency and style of leadership.

- I. First, we should think about the legacy of President Geingob through the lens of his intragenerational endowment on our governance architecture and socio-economic development.**

- II. Second, I want to share reflections on how the ideas and actions carried our nation during the most difficult years of his Presidency.**

I do believe that from these two mutually-inclusive perspectives, I shall be able to provide a Segway that will permit us to understand how President Geingob as Head of State shaped the direction of our institutions and their ability to deliver to our people. In that very same vein, we should seek to understand and examine the Presidential leadership of Comrade Geingob within a particular epoch, the events and the circumstances that shaped his actions and policies. Such an examination will

lead us to a sobering conclusion and better understanding of some of the challenges President Geingob encountered during his interrupted term of Presidential office.

The Constitution of the Republic of Namibia and the powers it bestows in the President in Chapter 5², is an entry through which any sound conversation can take place around the impact of the President on our Governance Architecture and service delivery. Chapter 5 imposes important responsibilities and constraints in terms of what the elected President of the Republic may be able to do and not do. Here, I challenge scholars and academics to do the heavy lifting in distilling detail.

Having said that, many of the challenges that we encountered as a country over the past nine years have been well documented. Our late President and senior members of the Government and the SWAPO Party articulated them on a number of occasions.

² See Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, Chapter 5. *The President*. Government of the Republic of Namibia, 2014.

These challenges include:

- A) The end of the commodity super cycle in 2014, which led to serious fiscal constraints and the inability of the Government to implement the expansionary SWAPO Party Manifesto of 2014³. Instead of an expansionary macro-economic policy, President Geingob was compelled to stabilize public finances and to introduce a fiscal consolidation strategy and expenditure prioritization in 2015, which culminated into the deepest Government expenditure cuts since independence. Any assessment of our performance as a Government and appraisal of the legacy of President Geingob should take cognizance of this reality. Fiscal consolidation and expenditure cuts were not easy decisions, nor were they popular. But it had to be done to safeguard our fiscal sovereignty. We are in a better fiscal position because of the difficult decisions President Geingob took then.**
- B) Droughts: You may recall that between 2016 and 2019, our country went through the most severe**

³ SWAPO Party Manifesto 2014. Consolidating Peace, Stability and Prosperity. SWAPO Party, 2014.
https://digital.unam.edu.na/bitstream/handle/11070.1/15807/Manifest_Swapo.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
accessed on 27 May 2024

droughts to have ever been recorded in our history. Significant financial resources in excess of 2 billion NAD that may have been used to provide an economic stimulus were directed towards drought relief for the most vulnerable sections of our population.

- C) COVID-19 – the Covid-19 global pandemic, of which the first index case was recorded in March 2020 in Namibia scarred many sectors of our economy, including tourism and retail. Thousands of jobs were lost, business closed down and the economy contracted significantly. In fact, a 2020 Socio-Economic Impact Report on Covid-19 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) estimated that prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, about 447,000 Namibians were living under the international poverty line of US\$1.90 per day. Another UNECA report estimated that the COVID-19 pandemic increased poverty levels, with a scenario of a 3.4 percentage point drop in GDP growth increasing poverty from 17.2% to 19.5%.⁴**

⁴ See. United Nations Development Programme Namibia. *Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of Covid-19 in Namibia*, UNDP, October 2020. <https://www.undp.org/namibia/publications/socio-economic-impact-assessment-covid-19-namibia> accessed on 28 May 2024

D) To the three points that have been raised in the public domain, I want to add a fourth point, which is the polarization of our Politics. With the advent of social media and the proliferation of political parties, our politics became extremely polarized in a manner that made the task of the Presidential decision-making and Governance in general extremely complex, if not plain difficult. [As a Party, we also felt the effects of polarization in 2017 and the impact thereof during the 2019 Presidential and National Assembly Elections, as well as the 2020 Regional and Local Authority Elections – the effects of intraparty polarization on Governance and service delivery cannot be underestimated. I am glad that we are no longer in that space.]

In response to the abovementioned challenges, in addition to the Constitution, we should credit President Geingob for having conceptualized Effective Governance in Namibia through a template that is anchored on processes, systems and institutions. The *Harambee*

***Prosperity Plan I and II⁵*, which we have always framed in the Government as accelerated impact plans for the implementation of our *National Development Plans* and *Vision 2030* has served as a bulwark against any deviations that may have affected our peace and stability as a country.**

When in doubt, President Geingob always referred to processes, systems and institutions to serve as the final arbiters in Governance. In doing so, President Geingob contributed immensely to the strengthening of our Governance Architecture. This explains why President Geingob placed emphasis on consultation and continuous dialogue through Town-Hall Meetings and innovation of our processes, systems and institutions through Pillar 1 on Effective Governance of the Harambee Prosperity Plan.

The legacy of President Geingob in the form of legislative reforms that have strengthened accountability and transparency through among others, the Whistle Blower and Witness Protection Acts; the Access to Information

⁵ See Harambee Prosperity Plan I – 2015-2020 and the Harambee Prosperity Plan II – 2020-2025, including Vision 2030.

Act and other pieces of institutional reforms and innovations have gone a long way in consolidating the gains we have made in furtherance of our ambition of prosperity for each and every Namibian.

From the vantage point of a resilient and Effective Governance Architecture, of which President Geingob was a crusader, we have been able to invest resources in the social sectors of education, health, social welfare, including the sector of infrastructure as a catalyst for economic development. You will agree with me that it is not easy to double the old age pension grant during a period of economic contraction. Yet, President Geingob did exactly that in 2016 when we doubled the old age pension grant from 600 NAD to 1200 NAD. If elected President of the Republic of Namibia, I commit to fulfill the wish of President Geingob to increase the old age pension to 3 000 Namibian Dollars.

I will not go into more detail by listing what President Geingob has been able to achieve during his tenure. But, in line with the priorities President Geingob had set out, there are successes that are worth mentioning at a high

level with the intention to demonstrate the gains we made as a country under his watch.

- A) Over the past nine years, we made tangible gains in the number of enrollments at Vocational Education and Training Centers (VTCs), marking an increase from 16,000 in 2015 to 35,000 student intakes in 2020, exceeding the HPP target of 25,000 new enrollments. Prioritization, construction and upgrading of VTCs in different parts of the country will stand out as one of the most important legacies of President Geingob in the education sector.**
- B) We also made tangible progress in strengthening our social protection system with the introduction of Food Banks to fight hunger poverty, which President Geingob had singled out as a threat to our stability.⁶ I should also add the sharp increases in the disability grant, including modest increments in the orphan and vulnerable children grants.**

⁶ See, President Hage G. Geingob. Inaugural Speech, 21 March 2015. In his inaugural speech, President Geingob elevated poverty eradication to a key priority when he said, *“The main priority for the next administration will be addressing the socio-economic gaps that exist in our society. Therefore, our first priority will be to declare all-out war on poverty and concomitant inequality. Our focal point will be to address inequality, poverty and hunger and that will involve looking at a range of policies and inter- ventionist strategies to tackle this issue.”*

c) In the economic sphere, I can think of several innovations, such as the establishment of a sovereign wealth fund, the Welwitschia Fund; the Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board (NIPDB); the Fourth Industrial Revolution Task Force and the expansion of new engines of economic growth through green hydrogen. There are many other innovations I can enumerate here – but time does not permit me to do so.

What I have sketched out here is just a snapshot of how we can think about the intragenerational endowment of President Geingob and his footprint on our Governance Architecture in all its manifestations.

I should caution that the Constitution, including well-articulated plans, concepts and ideas are not sufficient to deal with political and economic challenges. In fact, President Geingob is on record for having stated correctly that having a good Constitution is not a guarantor of prosperity.

I am not saying that ideas and concepts don't matter. In fact, they matter a great deal and the policies that we implemented over the past nine years affirm the force of ideas President Geingob brought to the fore.

President Geingob was bold in using language and concepts to mobilize Namibians around certain goals and objectives, such as unity and pulling together in the same direction. He was intentional in using the power of persuasion to diffuse tensions and to build bridges, both at home and in the governance of our foreign policy. President Geingob was intentional in getting Namibians to talk and debate about his framing of each year with a theme, which he used as a rallying call for Namibians to hold hands and to work towards shared objectives in a particular year.

However, there is a caveat which I want to elevate from my own experience of Presidential Leadership, having served under three Presidents. I have learned that values, wisdom, emotional intelligence and good judgment are equally important in the exercise of power. President Geingob possessed these vital ingredients, which allowed him and the Government he led to

navigate and steer Namibia in the right direction during what has been arguably the most turbulent period in our history as an independent country.

3. CONCLUSION

President Geingob dedicated six decades of his life in service of Namibians. I do believe that the conversation we are starting here in Ongwediva will be the beginning of an appraisal of the rich heritage President Geingob left behind as a crusader of Effective Governance. I am confident that we have sufficient material to locate the consequential legacy of the third President of the Republic of Namibia in the historical context in which he shaped democratic development in Namibia during a turbulent period.

I thank you.