

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**OPENING REMARKS
BY AMB. PENDA A. NAANDA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ON THE OCCASION OF
THE 23RD THEO-BEN GURIRAB PUBLIC LECTURE
SERIES, 17 JUNE 2025**

-Salutations-

Honourable Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth;

Honourable Selma Ashipala-Musavyi, Minister of International Relations and Trade;

Honourable Ministers;

Members of Parliament;

Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Vice Chancellor of NUST;

Distinguished Guests;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my distinct honour, on behalf of the Ministry of International Relations and Trade, to warmly welcome you all to the **23rd Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab Public Lecture Series**, a flagship platform that embodies our commitment to a transparent, participatory, and development-driven foreign policy.

The 23rd lecture, themed “***Fostering Resilience: Strengthening Intra-Commonwealth Trade and Investment***”, is taking place at a historic juncture, as Namibia prepares to host the Commonwealth Trade Ministers Meeting for the very first time outside of London. It is more than a diplomatic milestone, it is a testament to Namibia’s readiness to lead and

contribute meaningfully to global trade discourse, particularly from a Southern African perspective.

The merger of the Ministry of International Relations and Trade earlier this year, under the leadership of Her Excellency Dr Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, is a clear signal of our country's strategic shift towards economic diplomacy. With the Ministry's merger now under the able leadership of Amb. Selma Ashipala-Musavyi as Minister, trade, investment, and multilateral cooperation are now central to our national interest and must be owned not only by government, but by every Namibian.

This public lecture honours the late Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, a towering statesman whose life's work reminds us that diplomacy must be principled, people-centred, and purpose-driven. Tonight's gathering continues in that spirit, opening the doors of international dialogue to citizens, scholars, entrepreneurs, students, and all who seek to shape Namibia's future on the global stage.

As you will hear from our distinguished speakers this evening, this lecture will delve into some of the most pressing and promising areas of intra-Commonwealth trade, from digital innovation and green economies to the strategic value of critical minerals and industrialisation.

We hope that this evening's conversation will not only inform, but inspire. We hope it will challenge us to think boldly about how Namibia can position itself, through collaboration, resilience, and innovation as a competitive and values-driven player in international trade.

Let us use this opportunity to learn from one another, forge new connections, and deepen our collective resolve to build a prosperous Namibia anchored in shared values, sustained by inclusive trade, and propelled by the aspirations of our people.

With those words, I welcome you once again and wish you a meaningful and engaging evening.

I thank you.