



National Assembly

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY HON. SAARA KUUGONGELWA-AMADHILA, MP,
SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

AT

THE ROUNDTABLE FOR WOMEN IN POLITICS AND DECISION-MAKING

WEDNESDAY, 16 JULY 2025

SEASIDE HOTEL, SWAKOPMUND

- **Director of Ceremonies, Ms. Lydia Indombo, Executive Director in the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare**
- **Honorable Emma Kantema, Minister of Gender Equality and Child Welfare**
- **Honorable Ministers and Deputy Ministers**
- **Honorable Members of Parliament, also recognising amidst us former Members of Parliament**
- **Madam Boemo Segkoma, Secretary General of the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF)**
- **Executive Directors from various Ministries and the Secretary of the National Assembly present here**
- **Mr. Gram Matengu, Regional Director, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)**
- **Ms Rumbidzai Kandawsvika-Nhundu, Principal Advisor, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)**
- **Members of various Political Parties**
- **Management and Staff of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, National Assembly and National Council**
- **Members of the Media**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

A very good morning to you all

It is such an honour for me to be invited to speak at this auspicious occasion, which promotes Women in Politics and Decision-Making Roles, organized by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, in collaboration with International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA).

The objectives of this Round Table include strengthening the capacity of women in understanding democratic processes and the role of women in leadership and decision making through transformative social gender norms, as well as to enhance the understanding and knowledge of women parliamentarians through peer-to-peer learning and sharing of good practices.

I'm informed that this engagement will also provide women parliamentarians with opportunities for mentorship and coaching, amongst others.

Dear Women in decision-making,

Your role as women in decision making at your party levels, as well as those who are lawmakers in Parliament, and in society in general, is to create a conducive environment for women participation in the political space to thrive and to mobilize women to optimize their contribution to society.

The participation of women in the management of all aspects of societal affairs is not only important for inclusivity which is important for fairness and justice, but it also ensure that society fully deploys the talents and energies of all its people towards development and prosperity for all.

Therefore, when women are appointed in public positions, this is not a favour done to them, or only a matter of justice fir them, but it is also a recognition of the tremendous value that women bring to society (and thus is seen at the level of homes, families where they are compassionate and resilient care givers) and harnessing that for the common good of communities, nations and the world.

The UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is a comprehensive instrument to address women's human rights. By ratifying CEDAW, countries like ours have embraced the obligation to eradicate all forms of discrimination against women by adopting measures to respect, protect and fulfil all of the rights contained in CEDAW at the national level as stipulated in Articles 1 and 2. Article 7 is particularly relevant to the rights of women to political participation, including their right to right to vote , the right to be elected to public office and the right to fully participate in the public functions and service of their countries.

Dear Esteemed Participants,

The principles of the right to equality and the prohibition of discrimination, which are the basis of gender equality and women's political participation and representation in politics and decision making, are enshrined in the United Nations Preamble Charter, which states that there is a need 'to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women'. Furthermore, Articles 1 and 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which forms the basis of bills of rights, also enshrines the entitlement of all persons to non-discrimination, including on the basis of sex. Article 10 of the Namibian Constitution speaks to Equality and Freedom from Discrimination.

Women's political participation and representation is not only a fundamental human right and but is indispensable for democracy and sustainable development. Women are not only entitled to participate and represent themselves in processes and institutions where decisions that affect our lives are made, but they also entitled to all the rights and protections that are guaranteed for all persons under our laws and international conventions, including the right to dignity, the right to reproductive health, the right to education and to practice their professions, the right to justice, to participate in the

economy and to the protection from violence, including gender based violence be it at home, at the work place and in society in general.

Hon Members of Parliament and Distinguished Women Leaders in politics

Women's representation in the 8th parliament of Namibia is currently at 38% in the National Assembly and 14% in the National Council. During the 7th parliament, women in the National Assembly stood at 50%. The emphasis should be to grow upwards and not downwards. There is, therefore, a need for more to be done to preserve our achievement and further build upon them.

Apart from numerical strength, women have been occupying strategic positions in Cabinet and Parliament. We must ensure that this representation is impactful in terms of the influence that it brings to policy and law making and transformation of society.

Women constitute half of the world population. Women's participation in leadership is therefore critical for development and prosperity as this ensures that the political agendas and development policies prioritize issues that are of strategic interest to women, children and the girl child and that development is inclusive. Empowering women and men is not a zero sum game. Gender equity and equality is not about prospering women at the expense of men, it is about justice and prosperity.

As Speaker of the National Assembly, I look forward to continue to collaborate with the female and male Members of Parliament and Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare on efforts relating to capacity building for women, but more importantly to set up and/or strengthen structures systems and policies to enhance the participation of both women and men in decision-making at all levels.

Currently, women in parliament are benefiting from efforts in empowering women at different regional and international parliamentary fora such as SADC PF, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Union (CPA).

I look forward to the establishment of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus, which serves as a platform where women can continuously develop skills individually and collectively and coordinate efforts to influence the legislative processes where women, children and family issues are taken care of progressively.

Dear women,

As women we face many challenges. This requires that as women, we are conscious of the issues affecting women and gender equality in society and how to work with other women and also with men to transform society positively. The enactment and amendment of Laws must be extended to include the prohibition of cyber bullying and deep fake should be urgently addressed as it undermines women confidence and their progress in leadership.

I was informed that one of the key outcomes of this workshop is to share the experiences of women parliamentarians and how we can inspire transformative leadership and decision making at all levels.

Dear Esteemed Participants,

I hope through our continuous efforts of creating platforms for women, you will draw inspiration to take up positions in the political and public space and to be impactful.

The core, game-changing promise of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to, "leave no one behind". Therefore, attaining gender equality and empowering all women and girls, as outlined in SDG 5, is essential to promoting sustainable development and representative democracies in both individual nations and the global community.

SDG 5 outlines the necessary group efforts to bring about change and establish conditions that lead to real equality for all women and girls.

It is essential to address the major causes of gender inequality, such as violence against women and girls, uneven access to education, and gender-based discrimination in law and practice, in order to take on the challenge of bringing SDG 5 to life for women and girls worldwide.

The issue is not whether women are capable of performing an active role in development, democracy and peace building, the complexity lies in uncovering and redressing the entrenched systematic discrimination and marginalisation of women and girls in order to translate women's participation into critical influence and decision making in development and democracy building, because they have always contributed and are currently contributing at all levels in both the private and public spheres.

Honourable Members,

Ladies and gentlemen

Namibia is a great country; this is our country – we need to take hands, pull together in one direction and pave the way for generations to come. If we work hard (both men and women), Namibia shall continue to prosper and overcome these challenges.

Having said this, Director of Ceremonies, it is now my distinct honour to declare this workshop, Women in Politics and Decision-Making, officially open.

I wish you constructive deliberations!