



Republic of Namibia

Speech by Hon. Dr. James Sankwasa James
Minister of Urban and Rural Development
Address to the Students Union of Namibia – General Students
Assembly.

Delivered on 11 March 2026

Programme Director, Mr. Barry Katjire

Hon. Patience Masua- Acting Board Chairperson (National
Youth Council of Namibia)

H.E Osiogun Osikenyi Enyinnaya President of All African
Student's Union

Benhard Kavau- Board Chairperson (Students Union of
Namibia)

Shikesho Natangwe- President Students Union of Namibia

All invited Guest

Distinguished Leadership of the Students Union of Namibia,

Invited Guests,

And most importantly, the vibrant young men and women of our
beloved Republic of Namibia,

I greet you all in the name of God this morning.

I deeply honoured and profoundly privileged to stand before this gathering of young intellectuals and emerging leaders at the General Students Assembly of the Students Union of Namibia. I extend my heartfelt commendation to the leadership of the Union for convening this important assembly, which embodies the spirit of democratic participation and student representation within our national discourse.

I believe, that this gathering should not be seen as merely a meeting of students; but as a congregation of future policymakers, innovators, entrepreneurs, educators, and custodians of Namibia's destiny. Within this hall sits, individuals whose ideas, courage, and determination will shape the socio-economic and political trajectory of our nation for generations to come.

Programme Director, distinguished participants

Allow me to also acknowledge the presence of the various student and youth formations represented here today, including the Namibian National Students Organisation (NANSO), the African Students Association (NASA).

Your presence here today reflects the diversity of thought, organisation, and expression that characterises a healthy and vibrant democracy.

However, while you may represent different formations and ideological perspectives, I wish to encourage all student bodies and youth organisations to work together in good faith for a common national purpose. The future of Namibia will not be built through division among young people, but through unity of purpose, mutual respect, and constructive collaboration.

Competition of ideas is healthy in a democracy, but it must never compromise our collective responsibility to advance the interests of the nation.

Young people must therefore rise above unnecessary divisions and recognise that, despite organisational differences, you share a common destiny as the future leaders, builders, and custodians of Namibia.

The challenges facing our nation — unemployment, development, education, and social progress — require a generation of young leaders who are prepared to unite, to cooperate, and to place the national interest above narrow organisational loyalties.

A stronger Namibia will emerge when its young people choose unity over fragmentation, dialogue over hostility, and collaboration over conflict.

Director of proceedings, Ladies and gentlemen,

Democracy is not a passive inheritance. It is a living system that demands active participation, vigilance, and responsible engagement from its citizens. For a young democracy such as ours, the participation of young people in democratic processes is not optional; it is absolutely indispensable.

Young people must therefore not view democracy as a distant concept confined to ballot boxes during elections. Rather, democracy must be understood as a daily commitment to dialogue, accountability, civic responsibility, and constructive engagement.

I therefore encourage you, as students and youth leaders, to actively participate in democratic activities, to debate ideas, research on issues of national interest, to organize students activities responsibly, to first hold yourselves accountable for your actions and responsibly before you hold institutions accountable, and to advocate for your rights and interests through recognized and lawful structures of governance. I

encourage you all to be remember that student leadership is not different from any form of leadership. As a leader one must ask himself or herself questions like: What qualified me to lead or hold this position? Am I leading my followers to the promised land or in the wilderness? This is necessary since leadership requires vision based on your insight, fore-sight, hind- sight and peri-sight in order to yield tangible results.

The path to meaningful change is not through chaos, destruction, or disengagement, but through organized, principled, and strategic participation within democratic institutions. The Students Union of Namibia itself stands as a testament to this truth: that collective but reasonable voices, properly organized, can influence policy, shape discourse, and contribute to national development.

Young people must therefore learn the delicate but powerful art of engagement, to challenge respectfully, to question constructively, and to lead responsibly. Students are expected to analyse national issues in order to find national solutions to national problems.

Distinguished students,

Youthfulness is a season of energy, creativity, courage, and aspiration. It is a period of life that should be enjoyed, celebrated, and embraced. However, youthfulness must never be confused with recklessness or irresponsibility. Enjoy your youth, yes! celebrate it, explore your talents, build friendships, and dream boldly. But do so with a deep consciousness of responsibility, discipline, and purpose. Remember, however, that what an elderly person can see while sitting, a young person may find difficult to see even when standing. The success of the youth should be couple with guidance from the elders who have graduated in most if not all facets and faculties from the university of life.

The freedoms you enjoy today did not emerge in a vacuum. They are the product of sacrifice, resilience, and determination by those who came before you. The generation of your parents and grandparents fought relentlessly for the liberation and independence of this nation. Many paid the ultimate price so that you may sit freely in lecture halls, debate ideas openly, and organize yourselves democratically.

Freedom, therefore, is not merely a privilege. It is a responsibility, otherwise it may result into freedom, if not subjected to checks and balances.

You must guard it. You must respect it. And you must use it wisely to advance both your personal aspirations and the collective progress of our nation.

Dear students,

While government and institutions create enabling environments, the ultimate responsibility for your academic journey rests with you.

Study with diligence. Study with discipline. Study with purpose. Above all study what is relevant and demanded by the market. Time to have a relevant curriculum is now, if we have to arrest the escalating unemployment in Namibia. We should not study to be employed but study to be deployed.

Your presence at university is not merely a personal achievement; it is a national investment. The knowledge and skills you acquire here must ultimately be deployed in service of Namibia's development.

I particularly urge you not to confine your ambitions solely to urban centres. Our rural areas, the villages, settlements, and emerging towns that form the backbone of our nation require the energy, expertise, and innovation of educated young Namibians.

Rural Namibia is not a place to escape from; it is a frontier of opportunity. It is in rural areas where agricultural innovation can transform livelihoods. It is there where small enterprises can flourish. It is there where infrastructure, education, and healthcare require young professionals willing to make a difference.

The development of Namibia must not be geographically exclusive. It must be inclusive, balanced, and equitable. Therefore, when you graduate, I challenge you not only seek employment but to become creators of employment opportunities. Invest your knowledge, your entrepreneurial spirit, and your leadership within your communities. Help build local economies. Strengthen local governance. And contribute meaningfully to the transformation of both urban and rural Namibia.

Distinguished students,

The future of this nation will not be determined by the speeches of politicians alone, nor by policies written in government offices. It will be shaped by the decisions, values, and actions of young people like yourselves.

Be bold thinkers.

Be disciplined leaders.

Be ethical citizens.

And above all, be patriots committed to the advancement of Namibia.

The Students Union of Namibia carries an important responsibility, to champion the rights and interests of students while cultivating a culture of dialogue, unity, and constructive engagement.

I encourage the leadership of the Union to continue serving as a bridge between students, institutions, and government, ensuring that the voices of young people contribute positively to national development.

Let this General Students Assembly not simply be an event, but a moment of reflection, renewal, and recommitment to the ideals of responsible leadership and democratic participation. For democracy to yield tangible results, all players must be focussed, patriotic and ethical in all they do. Where integrity and ethical conduct prevails and survives, prosperity becomes the first born but where its absent destruction become the beneficiary.

In conclusion, allow me to remind you of a simple yet powerful truth: the future is not something that arrives by chance. It is something that is deliberately built by those who dare to prepare for it. Remember that the future is not the place you are going to but the decision you make and place you create today

Prepare yourselves.

Equip yourselves.

And rise to the responsibility of building a Namibia that is prosperous, inclusive, just and inclusive of all its citizens. For the family to be born individualism must die, for a community to be born, familism must die and for Namibia to be born and live as one nation, the tribe or ethnicity must die.

I thank you.

Long live the youth of Namibia.

Long live the Students Union of Namibia.

Long live the Republic of Namibia.