



**REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

**OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT**

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY EXCELLENCY LUCIA WITBOOI**

**VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

**ON THE**

**OCCASION OF THE COMMEMORATION OF THE 36<sup>TH</sup>**

**INDEPENDENCE DAY**

***"BEYOND 36: FOR A PROSPEROUS FUTURE"***

**SATURDAY, 21 MARCH 2026**

**KARASBURG, //KHARAS REGION**

**Director of Ceremonies, Honourable James Hawanga;**  
**Honourable Dr. Emma Kantema, Minister of Gender Equality and Child Welfare;**  
**Honourable Dr. Sanet Steenkamp, Minister of Education, Innovation, Youth, Sport, Arts and Culture;**  
**Honourable Clemencia Coetzee, Member of Parliament and other Members of Parliament present;**  
**Mr. Festus Mbandeka, Attorney General of the Republic of Namibia;**  
**Honourable Dawid Gertze, Governor of the //Kharas Region;**  
**Advocate Basilius Dyakugha, Ombudsman of the Republic of Namibia;**  
**Honourable Former Governors of the //Kharas Region present;**  
**Honourable Gerrit Witbooi, Chairperson of the //Kharas Regional Council;**  
**Honourable James Hawanga Regional Councilor for Karasburg – East Constituency and other Regional Councilors;**  
**Your Worship Councilor Franciskus Skeyer, Mayor of Karasburg and other Mayors and Local Authority Councilors present;**  
**Esteemed Traditional Leaders;**

**Pastor Non Basson and other Religious and Community Leaders;**

**Esteemed members of the Uniform Personnel;**

**Esteemed Captains of Industry;**

**Members of the Media;**

**Fellow Namibians;**

**Good morning.**

**I am greatly honoured to join you this morning here in Karasburg, //Kharas Region, to commemorate the 36<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, of our nation's independence, under the theme "Beyond 36: For a Prosperous Future."**

**Exactly thirty-six years ago, on the 21<sup>st</sup> March 1990, Namibia attained its independence and sovereignty after a long and bitter struggle for freedom. Our independence was achieved through the courageous, resilience and sacrifices of Namibia's brave sons and daughters, under the leadership of the Founding President and Father of the Namibian Nation, His Excellency Dr. Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma.**

**Fellow Namibians;**

**This year's theme "*Beyond 36: For a Prosperous Future*" calls upon us to move from reflection to action. It urges us to build on the solid foundations laid since Independence and to accelerate socio-economic transformation for the benefit of all Namibians. As a nation, we must emulate the selflessness, unity of purpose and resilience demonstrated by our forbearers. Their legacy should inspire us to serve the best interests of all Namibians in every corner of our country, including the //Karas Region.**

**The Government of the Republic of Namibia remains committed to inclusive development through the implementation of the Sixth National Development Plan (NDP6), which serves as our roadmap towards the attainment of our goals as contained in Vision 2030. Through this plan, we aim to strengthen economic growth, reduce inequalities, create employment and improve the quality of life for all our people.**

**Today, we celebrate our hard-won freedom and independence in the true spirit of One Namibia, One Nation. This enduring principle reminds us that unity of purpose remains our greatest strength, from which we must draw inspiration. Regardless of our backgrounds, cultures or political affiliations, we are bound together**

**by a shared destiny and a collective responsibility to build a prosperous Namibia and we should continue to foster that unity.**

**As a nation, we have built a stable constitutional democracy anchored on the rule of law, respect for human rights, good governance, peace and political stability, which have enabled us to invest in national development, expand social services and promote sustainable economic growth. These achievements are a testament to our collective commitment to nation-building and social progress.**

**Fellow Namibians;**

**Under the 8<sup>th</sup> Administration, the government has prioritised seven key areas: agriculture, sports development, youth empowerment, quality education and training, creative industries, quality healthcare and social welfare, as well as land, housing and sanitation. These priorities are aimed at accelerating service delivery, stimulating economic activity and improving livelihoods within the next four years of the current administration.**

**These strategic priorities are guided by the core leadership values of Her Excellency Dr. Netumbo Nandi-**

**Ndaitwah, which are: pragmatism, accountability, integrity, meritocracy and inclusivity. We should live by these values to ensure the government remains responsive, transparent and people-centred in its service to the nation.**

**Furthermore, on social progression, education remains one of the most powerful tools for social transformation. The government continues to promote and provide inclusive access to education through the subsidized tertiary education at public institutions of higher learning. This policy ensures that all Namibians, regardless of their socio-economic background, have equal opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills that empower them to contribute meaningfully to national development.**

**Moreover, Youth empowerment remains central to our development agenda. As a responsible government, we established the National Youth Development Fund to provide financial and technical support to young entrepreneurs across the country. I therefore urge the youth of the //Kharas Region and beyond to seize these opportunities offered by the National Youth Development Fund. To our young people here in //Kharas Region and other parts of the country visit your**

**nearest Governors' Offices and apply for these programmes to improve your livelihoods and actively participate in the economic development of your country.**

**Fellow Namibians;**

**Since Independence, Namibia has recorded significant achievements in the country, including //Kharas Region. Just on Thursday, I officiated at the inauguration of the state – of – the – arts Keetmanshoop Vocational Training Centre. The opening of this centre in Keetmanshoop will boost the economy of the region, uplift and empower young people, to be active contributors to our country's economic growth. As I did on Thursday, I invite all parents especially from the //Kharas Region to encourage our children to take the opportunities offered at the Keetmanshoop Vocational Training Centre in order to contribute meaningfully to our country's human resource development.**

**This and other developments in the //Kharas Region demonstrate our government's commitment in ensuring balanced national progress in all Regions of our country. The //Kharas Region has emerged from a historically marginalised area into a dynamic and strategic economic**

**hub, reflecting the Government's sustained commitment to inclusive development and regional integration. The region has recorded significant progress across key sectors, including the expansion of export-oriented agriculture along the Orange River, most notably table grape production in Aussenkehr and agri-processing linked to the Naute and Neckartal Dam projects alongside continued growth in mining, fisheries, and tourism. Major investments in infrastructure have strengthened connectivity, service delivery, and institutional capacity, while development has increasingly reached smaller settlements through improved water supply, sanitation, electrification, and road networks.**

**At the same time, access to healthcare has expanded through the growing network of clinics and health facilities in the region. The government continues to renovate and build new clinics to make health accessible to the residents of //Kharas region. Positioned within the Lüderitz–Aus Development Corridor, the region is now entering a new phase of industrialisation, driven by large-scale renewable energy and green hydrogen initiatives, which are expected to accelerate economic growth, create employment, and reinforce the //Kharas**

**Region's role as a key contributor to Namibia's sustainable development trajectory.**

**While the //Karas Region has made notable progress since Independence, it continues to face structural challenges, including limited value addition and industrial activity, as well as persistent gaps in water, sanitation, and housing, compounded by fiscal constraints. In response, the government is advancing key projects such as infrastructure upgrades in Grunau, water expansion in Ariamsvlei, water system rehabilitation in Noordoewer and Aussenkehr, and the servicing of plots in Aus. The strategic development of Aus as a gateway within the Lüderitz–Keetmanshoop corridor, alongside broader investments in settlement servicing and water infrastructure, reflects a continued commitment to accelerating inclusive and sustainable regional development.**

**Fellow Namibians;**

**As we celebrate this day, we equally honour the immense contributions of our former Heads of State, His Excellency Dr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, His Excellency Dr. Hage Geingob (May His Soul Rest in Peace), and His**

**Excellency Dr. Nangolo Mbumba, as well as our current first female Head of State, Her Excellency Dr. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, who continues to guide our nation with dedication and visionary leadership.**

**In the same breath, we also owe it to our forefathers and mothers, the like of Captain Hendrik Witbooi, Jacob Marengo, Mandume Ndemufayo, Samuel Maharero, Simon Kooper, Anna Kakurukaze Mungunda, Jan Jonker Afrikaner, Abraham Morris and many other heroes and heroines who led the early resistance fight against the foreign occupation of our country. Their sacrifices laid the foundation of the peaceful, democratic and stable Namibia we are proudly celebrating today.**

**As we commemorate this historic day, let us reaffirm our commitment to unity of purpose. Unity is the foundation upon which we can build greater prosperity, deepen social cohesion and secure a brighter future for generations to come.**

**Let us work together, as government, private sector, civil society, traditional leaders, the youth and all citizens, to advance development, strengthen our democracy and uplift the living standards of all our people.**

**As we move beyond 36 years, let us embrace innovation, strengthen resilience, and promote economic diversification and inclusivity to ensure no Namibian is left behind.**

**Happy 36<sup>th</sup> Independence Anniversary to you all.**

**May God bless the Republic of Namibia.**

**I thank you.**