



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

THE PRESIDENCY

**STATEMENT BY HER EXCELLENCY DR. NETUMBO
NANDI-NDAITWAH, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
NAMIBIA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL
OPENING OF THE 27TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL OF TRADITIONAL LEADERS**

19 OCTOBER 2026

OTJIWARONGO

OTJOZONDJUPA REGION

Check Against Delivery

- **Director of Ceremonies, Dr. Wilhelmina Shivute, Executive Director in the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development;**
- **Hon. Sankwasa James Sankwasa, Minister of Urban and Rural Development;**
- **Honourable Eveline !Nawases-Taeyele, Deputy Minister of Urban and Rural Development;**
- **Hon. Ministers and Deputy Ministers;**
- **Hon. John Julius //Khamuseb, Governor of Otjozondjupa Region and other Governors present;**
- **Esteemed Gaob Immanuel ≠Nu-Axa /Gâseb, Chairperson of the Council of Traditional Leaders;**
- **Esteemed Omukwaniilwa Fillemon Shuumbwa Nangolo, Vice Chairperson of the Council of Traditional Leaders;**
- **Distinguished Chiefs and Traditional Leaders;**
- **Hon. Paulus Nekundi, Chairperson of Otjozondjupa Regional Council and other Hon. Chairpersons of Regional Councils present;**
- **Your Worship, Councillor Leonard Simushi, Mayor of Otjiwarongo Municipality, and other Mayors and Chairpersons of Local Authorities in attendance;**
- **Hon. Regional and Local Authority Councillors in attendance;**

- **Distinguished invited guests;**
- **Members of the Media;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Good morning,

I am deeply honoured to stand before you today and deliver the Statement on behalf of Her Excellency, Dr. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, and President of the Republic of Namibia, who has delegated me to officiate on her behalf at this occasion of the official opening of the 27th Annual Meeting of the Council of Traditional Leaders.

As the Founding Father of the Namibian Nation, late Dr. Sam Nujoma, famously stated: "A nation without culture is like a tree without roots." It is within our rich cultural diversity that we find the strength to stand as "One Namibia, One Nation".

At this moment, I would like us to reflect on the national and traditional leaders who have sadly passed away. May their legacies inspire renewed dedication to our shared vision of a peaceful, secure, and united Namibia. In their remembrance, I would like us to rise and observe a minute of silence.

Director of Ceremonies;

Esteemed Members of the Council of Traditional Leaders,

This platform continues to reflect the enduring value of our traditional governance structures. You are the guardians of our rich cultural uniqueness and the foundational pillar of peace at the grassroots level.

Therefore, I must extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Council for its steadfast guidance. Your wisdom bridges the gap between state governance and community welfare. Together, we ensure that the fabric of our nation remains strong, resilient, and unified.

Our constitution explicitly recognizes the vital role of Traditional Authorities in building a harmonious and inclusive Namibia. As we deliberate during this session, I call upon all of you, as traditional leaders, to be active partners in driving socio-economic transformation.

Traditional leaders are our eyes and ears on the ground. You are there to serve the frontline defense against poverty, drought and food insecurity.

We must work hand-in-hand to ensure that local communities benefit directly from the natural and other resources found within their communal lands.

**Director of Ceremonies,
Esteemed Chiefs and Traditional Leaders,**

The honour of holding traditional leadership comes with immense responsibility. I must address several pressing matters that require your urgent wisdom and guidance in your respective communities. These are:

- **Combating Corruption and Land Grabbing:** Corruption is a cancer that eats at the very fabric of society. It is unacceptable for Traditional Authorities to deny less privileged community members access to communal land and farming opportunities.
- **Unregulated land allocations, illegal fencing, and disputes over communal boundaries threaten the stability of our rural communities. I urge this Council to work hand-in-hand with Communal Land Boards to ensure transparency, fairness, and strict**

adherence to the Communal Land Reform Act. We must work together to eradicate such practices and ensure fairness and transparency in all our dealings.

Article 100 of the Constitution states that; “Land, water and natural resources below and above the surface of the land and in the continental shelf and within the territorial waters and the exclusive economic zone of Namibia shall belong to the State if they are not otherwise lawfully owned”.

No traditional authority, district headman or head woman directly owns land in Namibia, unless such a person has purchased such land through proper channels as an individual to entitle him or her to sell such land as his or her own property. It has been witnessed that various traditional authorities and individual district headman and head woman are in the business of selling communal land as if such land was or is their own personal property. This unwelcome and corrupt practice need to stop before government institutes criminal cases against such individuals.

- **Resolving Succession Disputes:** Our primary strength as a nation lies in our unity. However, it is with a heavy heart that I note the ongoing legal disputes and social fractions caused by leadership succession disputes across several traditional communities. Leadership succession disputes drain state resources and weaken our communities, leaving many traditional authorities without recognized leaders for prolonged time.

Let me be clear, civil courts are not the rightful place to settle traditional disputes. Under our African traditional systems, chiefs are designated through sacred heredities and specific royal bloodlines and can only be removed through proper royal family lines - not by outside factions or populist campaigns. True authority of a Traditional Leader is rooted in our customs and traditions.

We must resist these efforts to politicize our traditional offices. We must resist these misguided elements in our society who treat our traditional offices as political battlegrounds or personal business ventures, enticing communities to bypass established customary protocols.

Therefore, I urge you to resolve disputes amicably and within the confines of customary law, rather than resorting to civil courts.

Addressing Social Crises (Gender Based Violence, Substance Abuse, Motor-Vehicle Accidents and Suicide/Mental Health Challenges): Our nation is facing deep pain, evident in the unacceptably high rates of Gender-Based Violence, Substance Abuse, Motor-Vehicle Accidents and Suicide/Mental Health Challenges. As elders and traditional bridge-builders, your insight and deep ties to the community are critical.

I call upon all Traditional Leaders to be active and partner with the government and law enforcement to root out all forms of violence and crises and to help us understand and mitigate these tragedies at the grassroots level. Your deep community connections make you uniquely positioned to foster lasting behavioral change.

Youth Empowerment and Social Cohesion: Our youth are navigating unparalleled social shifts.

As we embrace modernization, our young people risk losing touch with their roots, language, and values. Traditional authorities must design innovative cultural preservation programs to anchor our youth, instilling integrity, respect, and a strong work ethic. We need your support to anchor them in cultural and traditional morals because this country is in their hands as they are our future leaders.

Partnership in Development: The government recognizes traditional leaders as vital partners in development, not as hurdles. As we implement our national development goals, I expect you to forge alliances with business leaders and collaborate with Regional and local authorities to address the socio-economic needs of our people.

**Director of Ceremony;
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

When I took the Oath of Office as the Fifth President of our Republic, I made a commitment to guide Namibia toward an era of shared prosperity.

Today, we are in the process of implementing the Sixth National Development Plan (NDP6), running from 2025/2026 to 2029/30. This plan marks our final, decisive push toward attaining the long-held aspirations of Vision 2030.

As I frequently say, Namibia is blessed with the abundance of natural resources, and we are simply too few to be poor! However, to transform this resources into tangible wealth, we must work hand-in-hand with you, our traditional leaders, who understand the experiences of our people at the grassroots level.

NDP6 is bedded on a crucial theme: "Fostering Economic Growth, Inclusiveness, and Resilience for Sustainable Development." It is built upon four core pillars where your leadership is absolutely vital, Namely:

- **Economic Growth, Transformation, and Resilience:**

Our unemployment rate remains high because our industrial capacity has historically been limited. NDP6 aims to shift our economy from exporting raw minerals to local value addition and beneficiation.

Thus, we need your support to welcome and protect investments in your areas of jurisdiction, whether be it mining, green energy, or sustainable tourism. We want our youth in the regions and in your localities to gain jobs right where they were born.

- **Human Development and Community Resilience**

Our population is overwhelmingly young, with over 70% of Namibians making up this dynamic demographic. NDP6 focuses heavily on Youth Empowerment, Agriculture and Food Security, and Quality Health and Education.

Thus, I urge traditional leaders to spearhead local agricultural initiatives. We must cultivate communal land to feed ourselves. Furthermore, we look up to you within your jurisdiction to avail land to construct sports facilities, Technical and Vocational Education and Training Centers, Innovation and Artificial Intelligence Centers, Income Generating Activities and other Youth Empowerment Initiatives.

- **Environmental Sustainability:**

Many of your communities bear the direct brunt of severe droughts and climate shocks. NDP6 intensifies our climate resilience by promoting community-based natural resource management. Thus, we rely on your traditional wisdom to combat land degradation, manage local water resources prudently, and prevent illegal fencing that deprives some community members of shared pastures and other resources.

While I am on this point, I am informed that we might experience El Nino which will result in poor rainfall during the upcoming rainy season. I therefore urge our traditional leaders to take all necessary steps to ensure that our communities are well prepared for these eventualities all the times.

- **Effective Governance and Public Service Delivery:**

National development cannot succeed without transparency, accountability, and the rule of law. Thus, as traditional authorities, you run the customary courts and administer communal land allocations.

I appeal to you to exercise the powers vested in you with the highest levels of integrity, inclusivity, fairness, and to ensure that, amongst others, women and youth are never marginalized.

Distinguished Leaders,

The state cannot achieve this monumental vision alone. The story of Namibia has always been one of partnership - from the bitter trenches of the liberation struggle to the tables of national reconstruction. Let us unite with a single purpose. Let us ensure that the fruits of our independence are tasted in every homestead, every village, and every constituency across Namibia. I thank you for your unwavering service to our people, and I look forward to working side-by-side with you to fulfill the aspirations of Vision 2030.

Director of Ceremonies,

As I conclude, my administration remains fully committed to support our Traditional Authorities as enshrined in our Constitution.

We will continue to build institutional capacity, improve administrative tools and facilitate the provision of infrastructure necessary to operate effectively in collaboration with various government Offices, Ministries and Agencies, as well as private sector.

It is my desire and plea that, we will emerge from this annual meeting with renewed strength and determination. Let us reject tribalism, embrace unity, and work tirelessly toward a future of shared prosperity and unyielding hope.

With these words, it is now my singular honour to declare the 27th Annual Meeting of the Council of Traditional Leaders officially open.

I thank you.