



**Republic of Namibia**

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

**BY**

**HON. DEREK KLAZEN, MP**

**DEPUTY MINISTER OF URBAN AND RURAL**

**DEVELOPMENT**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE**

**COMMEMORATION OF THE AFRICAN DAY OF**

**DECENTRALIZATION, LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND**

**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT**

**REHOBOTH, HARDAP REGION**

**09 AUGUST 2019 AT 10:10**

**Embargoed until delivery**

## **Director of proceedings**

Governor of Hardap Region, Honourable Esme Sophia

Isaack and other Honourable Governors present

Hon. Chairperson of Hardap Regional Council and

Honourable Edward L Wambo

Chairpersons of Regional Councils present

Hon. Regional and Local Authority Councilors

Esteemed Traditional and Spiritual Leaders

Executive Directors

Chief Regional Officers

Dr. Victor Tonchi, our Guest Speaker

Our other guest speaker Ms. Agatha Mwet, CRO of

Otjozondjupa Regional Council

Local Authorities Chief Executive Officers

Representatives and exhibitions from Offices/Ministries

and

other public and private institutions

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning to you all!

I wish to start off by thanking you all, partners and stakeholders in Decentralization and Local Development, for having accepted my invitation to take part in the 2019 commemoration of the African Day of Decentralization, Local Government and Local Development, which is celebrated on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August each year all over the continent.

I wish to express my profound gratitude to the host region, Hardap Region, for the excellent logistical arrangements that it has made for us to have this commemorative event in this historic town of Rehoboth. In this regard I wish to thank the Honourable Governor and Hon. Chairperson of the Regional Council and your team for a job well done.

I am also thankful to Dr. Victor Tonchi, and Ms Agatha Mwet, our guest speakers, for their astute perspectives on the theme of the Day that we are commemorating today.

It is without doubt that their presentations this morning have indeed helped to illuminate the importance of decentralization and Local governance and particularly the centrality of Local Economic Development in addressing developmental challenges faced by society in both urban and rural areas in Namibia and the African continent in general.

### **Director of proceedings,**

The 10<sup>th</sup> of August, has been set aside by member states of the African Union (AU) as a day dedicated to the promotion of the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development as articulated in the *African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Development*. In this regard, Namibia as an AU member state is joining other AU States Parties in observing this special Day today.

## **Director of proceedings,**

Namibia being cognizant of the importance of participatory democracy and people centred development has since independence prioritized the development of an enabling environment in the form of legislative, policy and institutional setup which favours inclusive development and public participation in governance. In this regard, Chapter 12 of the constitution of the Republic of Namibia which serves as the foundation of the decentralised government system provides for the establishment of Regional and Local governments.

It is on this constitutional basis that government enacted the Regional Councils Act, 1992 (Act 22 of 1992) and the Local Authorities Act, 1992 (Act 23 of 1992). These legislative initiatives provide a wide scope of functional responsibilities, powers and duties for subnational government, in this case, Regional Councils and Local Authorities, to enable them to plan and develop their localities and the country at large.

Moreover, government adopted the Decentralisation Policy of 1997 and later enacted the Decentralisation Enabling Act, 2000 (Act 33 of 2000) to guide the implementation of decentralisation in the country.

### **Director of proceedings,**

The African Union has selected the theme of "***The promotion and effective implementation of local economic development as a sustainable solution for regional and local communities to forced migrants in Africa***", for this year's event.

This theme is aligned to the general AU theme for 2019 of "*The year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards durable solutions to forced displacement in Africa*".

The theme for this year consists of three sub-themes which were well articulated on by our guest speakers, namely Sub-theme 1: *“Local communities and the integration of migrants into the local economy: asset or obstacle to development”*;

Sub-theme 2: *“The humanitarian action of local authorities and the harmonious integration of migrants in their territories”*; and

Sub-theme 3: *“Taking migratory phenomena into account in local policies.*

The theme is also aligned to Article 7 of the African Charter on the Values and Principles of decentralisation, local government and local development which advocates for resource mobilisation and Local Economic Development.

### **Director of proceedings,**

While we as AU Member States are celebrating this very important day, we should equally be concerned about the global perspective and the pressure put on national and local economies by forced migrants moving between countries and within countries' territorial boundaries.

I am referring here to migrants moving from under-developed rural areas to developed cities and towns in search of basic amenities for improved living conditions and job opportunities.

African Union Member States and the world in general are faced with phenomenal challenges on force migrations and this trend can have both negative and positive consequences on the socio-economic development in areas of origin and destination territories depending on how it is handled and the readiness of recipient localities.

### **Director of proceedings**

It is evident from the theme and the sub-themes that there is immense responsibility and expectations placed upon subnational governments to address socio-economic challenges facing our continent. I trust that this theme will help us realise that as regional and local governments, we occupy a conspicuous and strategic position in the government system of our country because we are the first point of call and the host of choice for most people seeking a better life.

The question that begs an answer from all of us today is: what mechanisms and strategies do we have in place to receive, accommodate and integrate migrants into sustainable economic activities in our regions or local authority jurisdictions. This also calls for a thorough reflection on the adequacy of our national and local policies as well as the long term development plans and goals

### **Director of proceedings**

Indeed, persisting inequalities is one of the identified drivers of migration and exist not only among different countries, but also within countries in terms of better opportunities and living conditions. Sub-national governments should therefore integrate migration into development dynamics and planning. Mainstreaming migration into development planning and local governance generally can be the most effective manner to ensure policies across the board for strengthened migration management and consequently, enhanced development impact.

Additionally, decentralisation of services to the grass-root levels is considered as one of the most effective strategies for mitigating the migration of people from rural to urban areas, because through decentralisation, better living conditions and opportunities are created in areas closer to where the people live.

### **Director of proceedings,**

The government of the Republic of Namibia adopted the Local Economic Development White Paper during 2011 as a response and strategic tool to addressing and harnessing the economic potentials of regions and local authorities in Namibia.

Furthermore, the Local Economic Development Agency (LEDA) was also established as a unit within the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development to oversee and coordinate local economic development (LED) programmes in the country.

The LED program is aimed at assisting Regional and Local Authorities to coordinate and stimulate sustainable economic development activities through the formulation and implementation of Local Economic Development (LED) policies and strategies, with the primary objective of creating an enabling and conducive environment for economic growth, creation of decent employment, increase incomes and to improve the livelihood for all. The program is also aimed at addressing the economic development objectives at sub-national level through the identification and co-ordination of opportunities for development, with the participation of all relevant local stakeholders.

Moreover, LEDA supports Local Authorities and Regional Councils to stimulate sustainable economic development in their respective localities through provision of the following services such as Capacity building, LED implementation, localities regeneration and small towns development support, Research and policy advice, LED strategy development and Networking services.

I am pleased to state that notable achievements have been recorded, while there is still room for improvement.

## **Director of proceedings**

### **Ladies and gentlemen**

In addition to the aforesaid, the government of the Republic of Namibia is committed to the successful implementation of the policy of decentralisation. In this respect, I am pleased that we have over the past years witnessed the systematic transfer of some key service functions from central government to subnational government in order to empower the latter to effectively deliver public services to local communities.

As such while we celebrate the achievements of our decentralisation journey, we should also be cognisant of the fact that our decentralisation system still need to be nurtured and perfected before we could experience the full benefits thereof. Therefore, this calls for the unwavering support and commitment of all stakeholders, being Line Ministries, and Regional and Local Authority Councils.

Accordingly, I appeal to those ministries with functions earmarked for decentralisation but they have not yet been decentralised to prioritise the development of their decentralisation implementation action plans to avoid delays.

### **Director of proceedings**

In conclusion, I would like to once again, renew my Ministry's and government's continued commitment and support to sub-national governments as well as to the full implementation of the Decentralization Policy for improved service delivery and sustainable development.

I wish you all a happy **African Day of Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Development.**

And I thank you for your attention!

