

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY
HONOURABLE DR. PEYA MUSHELENGA, MP
MINISTER OF URBAN AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF
THE 22ND ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF
TRADITIONAL LEADERS**

19 AUGUST 2019,

**GOBA LODGE
GOBABIS**

Director of Ceremonies,
His Excellency Dr Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia
Honourable Festus Ueitele, Governor of Omaheke Region
Gaob Immanuel /Gâseb, Acting Chairperson of the Council of Traditional Leaders
Esteemed Traditional Leaders
His Worship Councilor Liberius Kalili, of Gobabis Town
Honourable Regional and Local Authority Councilors,
All other invited guests,
Members of the Media,

It is once again that time of the year when our traditional leaders from all over our country assemble together to fulfil their statutory duties and discuss issues concerning their communities.

As part of unity in diversity and inter-cultural harmony, the Council of Traditional Leaders has adopted a practice for this meeting to be hosted in each region of the country on a rotational basis, through the provision of Section 11 of the Council of Traditional Leaders Act, which allows the Chairperson to determine the venue and the date of the meeting in consultation with the Minister. It is for this reason that we have convened here in Omaheke Region today.

As a line Ministry mandated to oversee the administration of traditional authorities, the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development, apart from organising this meeting, continues to provide services to traditional authorities, to ensure that they render services to their respective communities. At the beginning of this year, the Ministry organised legal framework training workshops for traditional authorities, to ensure that they comprehend the provisions of law pertaining to their work, given their statutory requirements to support government programmes and policies and comply with the law thereof. Now that traditional authorities are enlightened about the provisions of law, they are required to comply with such provisions. South African academic, Dr Freddie Samuelson Khunou underscores this point in his discourse titled: “Traditional leadership and governance: legislative environment and policy development in a democratic South Africa”, published in the *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, when he wrote about the changes effected by the South African government on the post-colonial position, role and standing of traditional authorities in South Africa stating that:

These changes resulted in the creation of a transformed institution of traditional leadership based on a number of core constitutional values, for example democracy, human dignity, equality, human rights and freedoms, non-racialism and non-sexism. The institution of traditional leadership is obliged to ensure full compliance with these constitutional values and the provisions of the above-mentioned pieces of legislation.

Traditional authorities in Namibia are no exception. In order to fulfil their statutory obligations of supporting government, they are required to comply with the constitution, applicable legislation and policies, and refrain from any act which undermines the authority of those institutions of government, including regional councils and local authorities.

The training workshops were further aimed at equipping the traditional leaders with basic knowledge of the legal framework governing their operations, particularly the Namibian Constitution, Traditional Authorities Act No. 25 of 2000 and Council of Traditional Leaders Act No. 13 of 1997. It further equipped traditional authorities with conflict solving advices and mechanisms to strengthen their customary conflict solving processes in order to curb the tendency of our traditional authorities resorting to litigations in the courts.

Too often, the Minister and official's time is consumed by endless conflicts among the members of the traditional communities and royal families that are emanating from various factors such as disagreement on chieftainship succession. Some of these conflicts are created deliberately and typically driven by self-serving interests that are divisive, obnoxious and self-defeating. It is, therefore, unacceptable that each year repellent drum-beats of vexatious succession disputes dominate the agenda of the government and traditional authorities, at the expense of addressing serious socio-economic challenges facing our communities. This undesirable state could be avoided, if public interests prevail over personal concerns and the essence of African traditions is upheld. Writing about conflict resolution in traditional African society, in her discourse titled "Methods of conflict resolution in African traditional society, published in the Ethiopian interdisciplinary journal, *Africa Research Review*, Nigerian academic Adeyinka Theresa Ajayi stated that:

[T]here were many principles guiding conflict resolution in the traditional African societies. Those who want their conflicts resolved must have confidence in the tribunal that would resolve the dispute. These include elders, chiefs, priests, priestess...The disputants must have confidence in them. They (disputants) must

be ready to submit themselves to the constituted authorities.

Customary law and practices should be adhered to and traditional communities should endeavour to solve matters, without allowing them to escalate to litigations before the judiciary.

Director of Ceremonies

In their duties, traditional authorities interact with various stakeholders from the public and private sectors. In a modern world, traditional leaders need to understand matters related to various projects that their communities can undertake for self-sustenance and the social welfare of members of the communities. It is for these reasons that we have invited these stakeholders to this meeting to engage traditional leaders and provide explanations to programs within their sectors that impacts on traditional authorities.

Traditional leaders will further benefit from the address of the Head of State, His Excellency, Dr Hage G. Geingob, whom despite a very tight schedule has come to officiate at this Meeting. Our President just completed town hall meetings in all 14 regions last week, after which he went to attend the SADC Summit in the United Republic of Tanzania and he is here today. This demonstrates that your son of the soil is a hands-on politician and pragmatic leader, supportive commander and accommodating democrat, responsive ruler and considerate decision-maker, dynamic manager and robust policy-maker, an organised administrator and all-weather statesman, a consummate diplomat and revered internationalist. I invite him to come and address you.

I thank you