



Republic of Namibia

Keynote address

By

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At the Lusata Annual Cultural Festival

30 September 2018

[salutations]

For many years, it has become a regular custom for me to attend the Lusata Cultural Festival. I recall at one occasion when I arrived in the midst of the proceedings, having travelled from Windhoek the same day, and the Master of Ceremonies remarked that it was a matter of concern to note that I was not present at the festival. I would like to thank the Chief and his Kuta for the hospitality that I have always enjoyed at this Festival over the past years.

I have yet come here again to celebrate with you an important day in the calendar of the Mafwe traditional authority. I commend the traditional community for their commitment to preserving traditional values and customs through this festival. This is a befitting tribute to your ancestors. In Africa, events of this nature present an opportunity for reflecting on the past with a view to focusing on the future. The manner in which you organises this festival manifest your holding in the highest regards cultural virtuousness and traditional prominence.

I am particularly impressed by the manner in which cultural importance is imparted into the younger generations. The consistent participation of school children at this occasion guarantees the perseverance of the Mafwe cultural tradition. Scholars of education psychology highlight the importance of environment in the socialisation of the child. This event serves as socialisation process in the development of our schoolchildren. They will be nurtured into

adults that appreciate the essence of their culture and become conscious of their relevance and inherent dignity. Some of the younger generations look down upon their culture, as they regard them to be inferior to foreign cultures. Meanwhile they embrace foreign cultures without questioning controversial elements therein. In his discourse ¹ titled, the effect of western civilisation and culture on Africa, Arowolo stated as follows:

Traditional African family values breaking down very rapidly... Little wonder that there is no more respect for age; no more respect for values that we held sacrosanct in Africa; younger ones now find it very difficult to greet elderly ones... People no longer communalise; nobody wants to be anybody's brother's keeper.

This calls for a reflection and new thinking towards retreating to our cultural orientation. It calls for all generations to partake in this noble venture.

Many years ago, adventurous non-African writers misrepresented the essence of African cultures. They portrayed African culture to be just mere taboos, uncivilised practices and other negative attributes that do not make valuable contribution to humankind. I have high regard for young professionals who make positive contributions to the development and sustenance of their traditions and bring substance and relevance to cultural practices and streamline them towards human civility. They defend the moral fibres of our cultures and present a balanced evaluation of our traditional values and norms.

¹ Arowolo D., 2010, the effects of western civilisation and culture on Africa, in *Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences*, 1 (1).

These professionals should embark upon massive research projects that present the truth about African cultures and document their scientific findings that challenge the hitherto misrepresentation of our history and norms of our society.

Director of ceremonies

Individual traditional authorities do not exist in isolation, but they co-exist with other traditional authorities. I, thus, commend the Mafwe traditional authority for always inviting other traditional authorities from different parts of Namibia and even from neighbouring countries to the Lusata Festival.

Similarly, I was delighted to see Chief Mamili VII attending the Omagongo Annual Festival hosted by Uukwaluudhi Traditional Authority this year. The attending of traditional festivals by different traditional authorities presents an opportunity for exchanging cultural experience, something that enriches our traditional values and norms. In the same vein, I should underscore that in practising and celebrating their cultures, Traditional authorities and communities should guard against divisive and retrogressive trends of tribalism. They should promote unity in diversity.

Traditional authorities are part of the structure of the state. Accordingly, they exist alongside local authorities and both resort under the regional councils. It is, therefore important that there is cooperation among the sub-national structures and traditional authorities in the respective areas. All these institutions have the

responsibility of serving the people that they lead, and who belong to one big family, Namibia. Differences between these institutions can only negatively hamper development and bring to halt any positive growth and prosperity of our communities.

It is for that reason that as Minister responsible for sub-systems and traditional authorities, I encourage creations of foras in the regions where these institutions come together under the leadership of Regional Governors, who in terms of article 110A of the Namibian Constitutions are the link between the central government and the Regional Council, Local Authorities and Traditional Leaders in their respective regions. This serves to bring harmony and realise effective coordination of the activities of all these institutions in the best interest of our people.

Director of Ceremonies

In today's world, traditional authorities should make their presence felt and their voices heard on socio-economic issues affecting our people. These include issues of sustainable development. Our ecosystem need to be preserved and only when all stakeholders, including traditional authorities, are striving for environmental protection that we will be able to safeguard our animal and plant species from extinction. Some of the small animal species that were common sights in our surroundings have disappeared and we have denied the new generation an opportunity to know these. Similarly,

some of the old forests have been turned into deserts, thereby extinguishing grazing for both domestic and wild animals.

I call upon traditional authorities to familiarise themselves with the provisions of the Environmental Management Act and come on board to play their part in nature conservation, by sensitising their subjects on the importance of sustainable development. Already the environment is facing the threats of natural calamities that are effects of climate change. If added to this are the challenges of human destruction, we will aggravate an already growing problem befalling our ecosystem. In this respect, the opposite should happen. Afforestation projects should be led by traditional authorities to bring to life vegetation and maintain the originality of our ecosystem. Green projects should be rolled out to our rural communities, where traditional authorities will take the lead.

Traditional authorities are further the appropriate institutions to collaborate with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism to promote cultural tourism. The construction of cultural village models, i.e. structures depicting the lifestyles of people of a given traditional community is just one example. Such a structure will invite tourists to come and satisfy their curiosity and adventures. Accordingly, it will serve as an income generating Project to a traditional authority and community.

Cultural village models that I mentioned and cultural festivals should serve as platforms to promote traditional food. It is a well-known fact

that our traditional food are healthy, unlike the junk food served in outlets made from genetically modified products and are a source of many diseases, including cancer. Traditional authorities should join forces with the Ministries of Agriculture and of Health to champion the cause of promoting healthy diet made from our traditional nutrition.

Director of Ceremonies

Tomorrow, Namibians, including representatives of this traditional authority will meet in Windhoek to discuss a very important subject – the land. This is an issue of national interest that requires collected mind in order to chart the course for addressing the land question, which impacts greatly on our people being a resource on which our livelihoods depend. It is the wish of the government that as Namibians, we should find national consensus, justice and harmony in our divergence of views regarding the question of land. It is my belief that your representatives to the Conference will make meaningful contributions to the debates in our quest for land distribution programme that speaks to the needs of our people.

I wish you all the best in the 2018 celebration of the Annual Lusata Cultural Festival.

I thank you