



Republic of Namibia

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

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MINISTER OF URBAN AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

**OFFICIAL OPENING THE FIRST CONSULTATIVE FORUM ON
DECENTRALIZATION**

Windhoek, Khomas Region

March 27 , 2018

Director of Ceremonies

Senior Officials from Ministries and Regional Councils

Members of the media

Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to be here to address you as key stakeholders in the implementation of our decentralization agenda.

Director of proceedings

Ladies and gentlemen

The importance of decentralization in Namibia can be traced back to Article 1 of our Constitution, which states that all power shall vest in the people of Namibia, who shall exercise their sovereignty, through the democratic institutions of the State. In this regard and as pointed out by His Excellency President Dr Hage Geingob at the opening of the first meeting of Cabinet on 8 February 2018, the Government at all levels is accountable to the people and I quote *“it is to them, beside our personal interests, that we must serve in the most responsible and effective manner”*.

As a demonstration of our commitment to the democratic governance, that is a *“government of the people, for the people and by the people”*, the Government adopted the Policy on Decentralisation in 1997 and subsequently passed the Decentralisation Enabling Act, 2000 as policy and legislative frameworks to guide the implementation of decentralization in the country. The ultimate goal of these instruments is to enhance participatory democracy, improved service to the public and

the involvement of the community in the planning and realization of their development.

While Namibia is a unitary State, there is consensus that the most effective way to serve the people and to be accountable to them is by bringing the government closer to the people. In this regard and in keeping with Articles 102, 103 and 111, we have enacted the Regional Councils Act, 1992 and Local Authorities Act, 1992, which has seen the establishment regional councils and local authorities as the lowest tiers of governance closer to the people.

You as key stakeholders in the implementation of our decentralization agenda are here to take stock and to give an account on the progress that you have made, individually and collectively, in contributing to the set goals of decentralization. This workshop, which is aimed at reviewing the progress that we are making in meeting our set decentralization targets is timely and in line with the declaration by His Excellency the President of the year 2018 as *“The Year of Reckoning”*.

I have been appraised that our decentralization efforts, at both the center and sub-national levels are not without challenges and that the overall pace of decentralization is not at the level where it must be. Notwithstanding this, I wish to recognise the achievements and progress that have been made thus far.

Notably I wish to point out the decentralization, by delegation, of functions and requisite resources from the following Ministries:

- The Ministry of Land Reform;

- The Ministry of Information and Communication;
- The Ministry Education, Arts and Culture; and
- Ministry of Works and Transport.

I thank these partners in decentralisation for their commitment to the course and for their speedy action. In the same vein, I also call other decentralising line Ministries to expedite their internal decentralisation processes.

In according with the theme of “Reckoning”, this workshop should serve as a platform for us to review progress and to hold each other accountable where we are lacking behind. In this regard, each decentralising line-Ministries must report on the stage or level of decentralization where they are, progress made, challenges encountered and remedial action taken. On their part, Regional Councils must also report on how well they have integrated and executing the functions that have been decentralized and personnel that has been seconded to them already. The test of the success of decentralization is not the number of functions that have been decentralized but more in terms of the impact and improvement that has been brought about in form of improved service to the people. As such, the reports to the Regional Councils must include this aspect.

I am aware that an involved national process such as decentralisation cannot be without challenges. I also however believe that if we all pull together in the same direction, no mountain will be too high for us to climb and conquer. I wish to thank my staff and the Office of the Prime Minister for their continued guidance and support to the decentralizing Ministries and Regional Councils.

Among others, I wish to recognise their efforts in the areas of capacity-building and for having developed a Decentralisation Implementation Plan, which serves as a tool for setting decentralization targets, timelines as well as for tracking the progress that Ministries are making in meeting set targets and timelines. This Plan was presented to Cabinet and Cabinet has directed me to facilitate a workshop in April 2018 where members of Cabinet will be informed of the status of decentralization in the country.

This workshop is thus crucial and is expected to generate and provide the inputs that are required and will serve as the status report that will be presented to Cabinet. In this regard, I urge you all to take the workshop seriously and above all to provide true accounts of what you are doing.

Director of the proceedings

Ladies and gentlemen

It now gives me great pleasure to declare this Consultative Workshop on Decentralisation officially open.

I thank you your kind attention.