



Republic of Namibia

STATEMENT

BY

HONOURABLE SOPHIA SHANINGWA, MP

MINISTER OF URBAN AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

ON OCASSION OF THE

OFFICIAL INAUGURATION OF THE EENHANA FIRE STATION

MONDAY, 29 JANUARY 2018

EENHANA

- **Director of Ceremonies,**
- **Hon. Governor of the Ohangwena Region, Cde. Usko Nghaamwa,**
- **Hon. Amos Nangolo, Mayor of Eenhana Town,**
- **Hon. Regional & Town Councilors present,**
- **Cde. Hafeni Hatutale, Regional Coordinator for the SWAPO Party,**
- **Members of the Media,**
- **Esteemed invited guests,**
- **Ladies and gentlemen;**

I am particularly pleased to be standing in front of you today in order to inaugurate the Eenhana Fire Station. This is indeed a great day for the people of Eenhana and as I can see, you are also happy to be here as well.

Program Director; to start with, the Eenhana Fire Station was completed during August 2016 at the cost of N\$6.1 million, which was provided for by the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development. This is one of the many fire stations that we have sponsored throughout the country in order to complement the services of the Local Authorities in Namibia.

The Ministry of Urban and Rural Development has gone to great lengths to ensure that at least each and every Local Authority is equipped when it comes to civil defense, protection against fire and readiness in terms of emergency response as well as to ensure community resilience. Although there is still a lot to be done, the onus is now on

the respective Local Authorities to ensure that they do not just erect buildings that resembles fire stations but should fully implement and plan for emergency response services.

It is very important therefore, Director of Ceremonies for the Eenhana Town Council to note the following roles and responsibilities of every Council that has the fire and emergency services as a function within its establishment. The roles are as follows:

Councils have a key role to play in emergency management and supporting community safety. While councils are one of the few constants for communities throughout the emergency management continuum, local government is not a specialist in any particular hazard, nor does it see itself as a response agency leading and directing resources to combat an emergency.

Often, councils are in the unique position of being the only familiar 'face' among a number of agencies, which assist affected communities throughout an emergency. It is therefore a responsibility of each Council to forge partnerships and linkages with other institutions that would support its emergency management services but not just to wait for the mother Ministry to always feed you with assistance.

Recent events have shown that there is a need to move away from the view of councils as the primary providers of resources during an emergency event, so that council resources are more readily available to ensure the continuity of essential community services and the early initiation of relief and recovery services.

Currently, it has become imperative for Councils to actively participate in the emergency management services since they are at the forefront of such emergencies and despite lack of capacity and resources; there are certain roles that a Local Authority Council can focus on. Information provision, community strengthening and engagement, facilitation of planning and partnerships, and risk mitigation are among the sector's key strengths that require much attention.

By focusing on those functions, it become evident that emergency management will no longer be viewed as an add-on but should be integrated into Council's core business so that Councils and their communities are better prepared for emergencies.

Director of Ceremonies; the relationship between a Council and its community is fundamental and significant. Councils are expected to reflect community expectations and the democratic foundations of local government means that a

council that forgets this basic requirement is soon reminded at the ballot box. Elected Councillors, especially the Mayor, are often looked to in times of emergency to provide leadership, support and to be the voice of the community in order to obtain assistance for affected people and businesses.

Local government sees its cradle-to-the-grave involvement in people's lives and its day-to-day role in community development as providing a sound foundation on which to build effective community resilience. Councils should view their links to community groups as a valuable tool to enable them to deliver measures to improve community resilience.

This relationship should be recognized and supported as part of the State's overarching emergency management strategy. This support should include assisting Councils to facilitate opportunities for other agencies to implement programs in a coordinated and strategic way to help build resilience, rather than maintaining the current disjointed delivery mechanisms.

Therefore, your role as Eenhana Fire and Emergency Services should include but not limited to the following:

- 1) Facilitate strategic all hazard planning at the local and sub-regional levels in partnership with other *agencies***
- 2) Provide and coordinate relief services**
- 3) Coordinate local recovery**
- 4) Establish new, or develop existing, structures to promote community engagement in emergency management and advocate on behalf of communities**
- 5) Assist community recovery by continuing to deliver core community services, including managing and restoring local infrastructure during and after emergencies**
- 6) Undertake risk mitigation measures, including the maintenance of municipal owned and/ or managed infrastructure**
- 7) Foster partnership and network development**
- 8) Influence emergency management planning at the regional level**
- 9) Provide municipal resources where available**
- 10) Support volunteer management**

Councils can support the coordination of volunteer helpers when they have the capacity to do so. Volunteers can play an important role in relief and recovery however the coordination of volunteers, especially spontaneous volunteers, can be a complex and resource intensive activity, which would require thorough planning and execution.

That being said, Director of Ceremonies, Ladies and Gentlemen; the sustainability of this Fire Station and the existence of an effective and efficient fire and emergency response services would require a pro-active approach, one in which the Eenhana Town Council must take the leadership front.

Only through the hands on management approach will Eenhana Town Council and indeed the community of Eenhana will be able to pull this through. I am therefore urging Council, especially the Mayor to make emergency management as one of your Council priorities. However you must bear in mind that optimal resource utilization should also be a key driving factor in your planning and execution of these services, bearing in mind the fact that other issues such as housing and proper shelter for your citizens requires immediate and undivided attention.

Director of Ceremonies, Hon. Governor; I would like to conclude by thanking the Eenhana Town Council for ensuring that the Fire Station is completed in time and as planned despite the lack of adequate funding that was once experienced during the project implementation. I am happy that at least you have tried your best to complete the project and I have not heard of any major problems relating to the utilization of funds for the project.

As I move towards my conclusion, allow me to congratulate you on a job well done. Omake! Director of Ceremonies, Ladies and Gentlemen: it is now my singular honour and privilege to declare the Eenhana Fire Station officially open.

I thank you.