



Keynote Address

by

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Development**

at the

**Official Opening of the First Session of the Junior
National Council**

24 May 2017

- **Honourable Margaret Mensah-Williams, Chairperson of the National Council**
- **Honourable Bernard Sibalatani, Vice-Chairperson of the National Council**
- **Honourable Members of Parliament**
- **Your Excellencies, Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Members of the Diplomatic Corps**
- **Honourable Members of the Junior National Council**
- **Distinguished Invited Guests**
- **Members of the media**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

I am as honoured to stand here today, in the National Council Chamber to address the members of the first ever Junior National Council, as I am appreciative for the opportunity to interact and exchange views with some young, bright minds. I commend the National Council, under the able leadership of the Chairperson, Honourable Margaret Mensah-Williams, for creating this forum for the young leaders and future law-makers of Namibia. Now, school-going youth from the length and the breadth of our vast and diverse country, can come together to discuss and debate those contemporary issues affecting them and also offer solutions, to the multitude of social and economic challenges facing our country and development prospects.

**Honourable Chairperson,
Honourable Junior MPs,**

The mission of the Junior National Council is in line with the objectives of the Strategic Plan of the National Council and the 2016 Harambee Prosperity Plan. His Excellency the President, Dr. Hage Geingob has placed 'inclusive growth and shared prosperity' at the center of Government's developmental approach and his clarion call to ensure that *"No one feels left out"*, is a directive that has been issued to all citizens; regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, creed or income status. This Call implores all of us to join hands and to pull in the same direction. Towards a common destiny of shared growth and prosperity. I believe this is the objective of our gathering here today.

Our President indeed values the input of the youth and has made this consistently clear, since his appointment. It is the expectation of our national leaders, that we the youth of Namibia become increasingly involved and play an active and positive role, as complementary partners to the three Organs of State. This includes you, the Members of the Junior National Council.

Namibia is a young nation, with an aggregate age of 21 and a bulging youth population, which represents 37% of our total population. We therefore rely on the full participation and contribution of this sizeable cohort of youth, to implement our good plans and shape the trajectory

of the Namibian House, towards sustained unity, peace, stability and prosperity.

The Harambee Prosperity Plan places further emphasis on the role of Youth in our country's economic development. The Plan provides clear strategies for implementation, to achieve Government's intent, which is (quote unquote) *"To develop and harness this human resource capacity to contribute towards employment creation and SME driven economic growth, propelled by the youth."*

The opportunity is clear and the young people of Namibia are considered a key stakeholder. A paradigm shift becomes necessary amongst those who have an aptitude for business and entrepreneurship, to change from being Job Seekers, to becoming Job Creators. While we acknowledge that business is not for everyone, the Government is committed to support those who are courageous enough to enter the cauldron of commerce.

Some of greatest innovations and inventions in history have come from people our age. For example, the creator of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg, while still in high school, was already creating software out of his fascination for computers and programming. At the age of 20 he created Facebook, the world's biggest social-networking platform. Today he is also one of the wealthiest persons in the world.

**And while I am on this topic of Facebook,
Honourable Chairperson,
Honourable Junior MPs,**

I would like to sensitize the House, that this social media age of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Whatsapp and Snapchat; all these digital networks, have become a force of integration, bringing us closer together as a country, a continent and as a global village.

Online social networks present many advantages, such as the intensification of the 'Second Trade Diplomacy' and Cultural exchange and promotion. Every one of our citizens that is active online, becomes an automatic representative of Namibia, to the world looking in. This Information Age transcends borders and has brought knowledge and information to the fingertips of even the most remote amongst us.

This is progress we cannot reverse, but as influencers and law-makers, it does introduce the urgency to legislate effectively and for Governments to implement their good Plans with precision and vigour, because of the rising expectations that come with this exposure and access. The high integration also brings the existing inequalities and inequities in our society, to the fore.

In the same click of a button, a young child who Has Not can witness the excess, the opulence and the privilege of those Who Have. This can

create hope, in as much as it can create a sense of despair, injustice and impatience for Government to deliver on expectations and progressive demands.

**Honourable Chairperson,
Honourable Junior MPs,**

I have had the chance to study the theme and sub-themes of this session, which centre around the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). On 21 March 2015 our President Dr. Hage Geingob declared all out war against poverty and concomitant inequalities. Later that year in September 2015, world leaders converged at the United Nations 70th Session of the General Assembly, to adopt the SDGS, of which Goal 1 is to End Poverty. This is indicative that Namibia's leadership is visionary and very much attuned to the global strategic priority.

The overarching first SDG to End Poverty in a holistic manner will have a positive impact in achieving the other SDGs, which include reducing inequality; achieving inclusive and sustainable growth; hunger; health; education; gender equality; sustainable production and consumption and climate change by 2030.

The Government of Namibia has dedicated efforts to formulate and implement appropriate policies and strategies to eradicate poverty in Namibia, by 2025. In other words, Namibia aims to achieve SDG1 five years ahead of the global deadline of poverty eradication set by the 2030 Agenda for SDGs.

Mainstreaming of the SDG priorities is evident in the Harambee Prosperity Plan and soon to be launched NDP5. To illustrate this commitment, current Government education policies and spending, demonstrate the commitment to work towards to the attainment of SDG4 on Education, which focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of life-long learning opportunities for all.

In this regard, we are interested to learn from your unique experiences from the grassroots. I personally look forward to gaining insight from your ensuing debate, over the coming two days. In return, I will request a copy of the official report of your session; I will then study it carefully and brief His Excellency the President.

**Honourable Chairperson,
Honourable Junior MPs,**

As you proceed into your session and upon your return back home, I encourage you to think about solutions. I apply an acronym, in my day-to-day work, which I would like to share with you today. I call it S.A.M and SAM stands for:

- solve a problem,**
- address an issue and**
- meet a need.**

I find S.A.M to be a practical tool, which we can apply as we serve in our communities and as you engage in discussions and debate. The objective should and must single-mindedly remain, to solve problems sustainably and add value to the lives of fellow Namibians.

You are encouraged to remain in touch with the realities on the ground, keeping your feet firmly on the ground and to continue engaging your networks and community, to deepen knowledge and understanding of the issues of the day.

I am well aware; that on a day like today, some of you may feel intimidated and even think that you are still too young or too small to make a difference. I am here to remind and encourage you, that this could not be farther from the truth! I would like to borrow from the wisdom of the Bible, which in James Chapter 3 verse 5 says, that "*a great forest is set on fire by a small spark*". That small spark is you and I. That small spark, referred to in the Bible, is our tongues. Our thoughts, which are articulated as words, through our voices.

Through this platform you have been accorded the opportunity to not only make a national contribution, but to serve your community, while also developing your personal leadership acumen, under the guide and mentorship of seasoned and experienced national leaders.

**In conclusion Honourable Chairperson,
Honourable Junior MPs,**

I would like to affirm that youth development and empowerment remain central to Government's development agenda. The Government is ready to work with the young people of Namibia, in the spirit of Harambee, to tap into their energy and innovative mindset and bring about rapid and transformational socio-economic change, much to the benefit of all Namibians.

With these few words, I wish you wisdom and courage, during your session.

Thank you for your kind attention