



SPEECH FOR THE CASSINGA COMMEMORATION (ETAYI)

DATE: 04 MAY 2018

VENUE: OIKOKOLA CENTER (OIKOKOLA VILLAGE)

Hon. Johannes Elisa, Regional Councilor;
Mr. Andreas Nghituku, Headman of Oikokola Village;
Cde. Sofia Handobe, SWAPO District Coordinator;
Esteemed Cassinga Survivors;
Members of the Media;
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am deeply honoured to be commemorating Cassinga Day with you the residents of Etayi and those who may not be from here but joined us this morning. It has been exactly 40 years since the Cassinga refugee Camp in Angola was attacked by the colonial South African government, yet today we are still commemorating that horrific day, in an Independent Namibia. This year the main event will be taking place in Windhoek at the heroes' acre. The Angolan president, His Excellency João Lourenço is attending the Cassinga Day commemoration and expected to lay a wreath at Heroes' Acre upon invitation of our President His Excellency Dr. Hage Geingob. In addition, Safety and Security Minister, Charles Namoloh, took a delegation of Cassinga survivors and interested Namibians to Cassinga in Angola on the 28th of April for the 40th anniversary of the Cassinga massacre. The Minister actually urged that many Namibians should join him at the pilgrimage to Cassinga and many got a chance to witness what we have been hearing about all the time, a painful and enlightening journey it was.

Ladies and gentleman it may be hard for some who are much younger than us today to understand why we continue to commemorate this day. When our elders say, the liberation struggle was long and bitter, it is not a fairy tale but a reality which happened, and history need to be told so we do not forget where we come from. The armed struggle of Namibia begun at Omugulugwobashe on 26 August 1966 under the leadership of the late John Ya Otto Nankudhu. SWAPO grew stronger through waging the guerrilla war, and the Apartheid South African government responded by attacking bases in Namibia, our military liberation movement PLAN received further funding and stepped up its efforts by establishing semi-liberated zones and stroke further.

Fast-forward to the same day as today on the 4th May 1978, in Angola in a town called Cassinga the worst massacre ever experienced by Namibians in the

History of SWAPO Party happened. The Colonial South African Defence Force ran an air strike on a refugee camp near the village of Cassinga, followed by a deployment of paratroopers. The camp was occupied by exiled SWAPO refugees and their families. 165 men, 294 women and 300 children died in this attack. Today we pay tribute to the almost 800 lives lost on the fateful day of Cassinga, we should never forget that darkest day of our liberation struggle, where innocent children and women died at the hands of the Apartheid South African government that delayed the independence of Namibia.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are privileged to have Cassinga survivors who have continuously narrated the emotional events of Cassinga day. Let us forever be grateful to the sons and daughters of our soil, who sacrificed their lives and those who sacrificed their blood on that day. Let history educate us, let us be inspired by the sacrifices made by those who went before us, may history guide the choices we make today. There is a Proverb in Oshiwambo that says ***“Ampundja ya koka naHe, Ambambi ya putuka naYina, ha hayili uukole woposhaanda, shaashi uululu”***. Which means, do not abandon the doctrines of your upbringing, because new ideologies might harm you. Some young people today have a tendency of adopting new principles other than that of our forbearers of the liberation struggle. I thus call on every young person to protect the peace and stability we have in Namibia, and to honour those who sacrificed their lives for us to live a free and independent Namibia.

Director of Ceremonies

Against all odds, and without forgetting the sacrifices of those who resisted colonialism, such as, Chief Samuel Maharero, Captain Hendrik Witbooi, Ohamba Mandume Ya Ndemufayo, Omukwaniilwa lipumbu Ya Tshilongo, Chief Hosea Kutako and many more to mention but just a few .I am reminded of the President, His Excellency Dr. Hage Geingob words of wisdom on Cassinga day in 2016, he said ‘Namibians should dedicate themselves to honour fallen heroes and heroines by uniting as one people, one Namibia and one nation in the spirit of Harambee to build a Namibian House worthy of the struggle.’ What we can deduce from the speech of our President, we often divide ourselves along tribal lines, yet we forget those who have sacrificed their lives for all Namibians and their greatest weapon was UNITY. We should denounce tribalism and any form of ism’s to the core, our martyrs have not died in vain that we today think one tribe is better than the other, there is no honour in that.

Equally when we go down the memory lane we should not forget those who sacrifice their lives on this long and bitter struggle abroad and at home. Let us pay homage the Patrick Luganda, Dimo Hamaambo, Peter Nanyemba, Lineekela Kalenga, Nakada Tashiya, Helao Nafidi, Greenwell Matongo, Abraham Iyambo of recent we lost Late Mzee Kaukungwa, Andimba Toivo Ya Toivo and a while ago a golden voice in the be wilderness that inspired many of us to join the liberation struggle the late Sackey Namugongo went silent permanently las month. These and many others drawing from the inspiration and bravery of Dr. Sam Nuujoma, Dr. Hifikepunye Pohamba and Dr. Hage Geingob pulled us to independence ***sing (Tunanena Kongudukiro).**

Ladies and Gentleman

Fellow Namibians, it is with great sadness when I hear some individuals today claiming that they don't see any difference in terms of developments after independence, allow me to state a few facts excluding the peace we enjoy. At Independence Namibia was overwhelmed by inequalities, It is estimated that at Independence some two thirds approximately 70 percent of the population were living in conditions of abject poverty, according to 1991 World Bank figures. The cause of the majority Black People living in poverty was at product of men made system of labour exploitation. Blacks were denied the means to progress to higher levels within the labour market and were largely confined to wage labour at the most basic levels even if you were qualified. Racial and class division had a large gender element, where employment was available to black women, it only came in the form of jobs as domestic workers, as well as menial employment as cleaners in companies, and this psychological discourage women to dream beyond those menial jobs and yes till today we saw how it has affected our society.

Post-independence, all Namibian are equal before the law and government understand the effects of colonialism and thus introduced acts such as Affirmative Action and NEEEF policy to reduce the economic inequality. Government has brought development and services closer to the people such as but not limited to;

- Today, almost 195 000 Namibians are currently receiving social grants from Government which include Old Age Pension, People living with disabilities and Vulnerable Children
- In 2007 The NSFAP reported to have assisted close to 22 000 students since 1997 to the tune of close to N\$400 million
- Vocational students, student teachers and nurses receive study grants to pursue their training;
- The railway (Olutenda) has now reached Northern Regions;
- Namibia has one of the most modern postal and telecommunication infrastructures in Africa linked directly to most countries in the world
- The country has two harbours handling merchandise imports and exports and servicing the fishing industry which contributes to employments and GDP to benefit Namibians;
- Namibia has eight airports run by the Namibia Airport Company (NAC) Ltd. The NAC was established through the Namibian Airports Company
- Towns, Village and Settlement proclamation bring services closer to the people, i.e. Okalongo, Oshikuku and Ongenga.

All those interventions I mentioned are an indication that the SWAPO Party led government is serious about reducing, the social and economic inequalities that were brought about by the 106 years of colonialism at the hands of Germany and later South Africa.

Finally director of ceremonies, I would like to thank the Etayi Councillor Hon. Elisa Johannes and the whole organising committee that made sure this event is organised on a befitting day and accord us an opportunity to honour and I will also would like to extend and encourage the entire constituency and Omusati Region to prepare for the upcoming National elections in 2019, this was the main result of Independence, that you are now able to defend your democracy by holding elections.

As we commemorate this very emotional day in the history of our country let us pay homage to our heroes and heroines especially those who did not get the opportunity to enjoy the fruits of Independence. Their precious blood waters our freedom. Let us honour them and may their souls Rest in Eternal Peace.

Long Live Namibia

Long live the Spirits of our Heroes and Heroines