

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY
HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBA, PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA ON THE OCCASION OF
THE OFFICIAL OPENING
OF THE
9TH HELAO NAFIDI ANNUAL BUSINESS EXPO 2013**

30 OCTOBER 2013

WINDHOEK,

**Check Against Delivery*

Director of Ceremonies;
Honourable Ministers;
Honourable Members of Parliament;
Honourable Usko Nghaamwa, Governor of
Ohangwena Region;
Your Worship the Mayor of Helao Nafidi
Town;
Honourable Regional and Local Authority
Councillors;
Your Excellencies, Members of the
Diplomatic Corps;
Meekulu Martha Mwadinomho Christian
Nelumbu; Ohamba of Oukwanyama
Traditional Authority;
Esteemed Traditional Leaders;
Captains of Industry;
Esteemed Exhibitors and visitors;
Members of the media;
Ladies and Gentlemen;

I wish to congratulate the Helao Nafidi Annual Business Expo organizers for successfully hosting this very important event. I also want to register my sincere gratitude to the sponsors of this event for the financial and other contributions that made this event a reality.

The main objective of this event is to showcase products and services produced by the Helao Nafidi community, as well as those from other parts of the country. As Government, we regard events such as this to be very important in the developmental agenda of our country because they contribute to the upliftment of the socio-economic development of surrounding communities and the country at large.

In this context, our Government continues to render full support to this event and to similar initiatives that are aimed at promoting economic, trade and commercial activities in our country.

Director of Ceremonies,

I am informed that the first Helao Nafidi Business Expo took place in 2005 at an open space in Oshikango and that since then, the number of visitors has been increasing from year to year. This increase demonstrates the seriousness and visionary leadership of those responsible for organizing the Helao Nafidi Business Expo. I, therefore, commend the leadership of Helao Nafidi for a job well done. Your efforts contribute immensely to the economic development of the region and the Government's strategy for "Growth at Home" in achieving the national goals and objectives of Vision 2030.

The “Growth at Home” strategy is aimed at diversifying the economy and encouraging local value addition and manufacturing. The Ministry of Trade and Industry will "champion" this strategy with emphasis on the diversification of our economy on a higher level. It also focuses on the contribution of local value addition and manufacturing, enhanced local supply side capacity as well as better coordination and collaboration between all role players in the economy, including public-private dialogue". I, therefore, encourage all the captains of the industry to join hands with the Government in its walk to “industrialization”

Director of Ceremonies;

Trade fairs, exhibitions and expositions are platforms where business networks and relationships are created between customers, producers and suppliers for mutual benefit. This initiative brings Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs), big corporates and investors at one place to share ideas, network, and enter into business deals that can lead to the creation and development of new enterprises, job opportunities and poverty alleviation in our communities.

I remember Helao Nafidi as one of the war zone areas in Namibia before independence. However, in 1996, our Government decided, through its development policies to transform the war zone settlements into towns of merchants for cross border trade by establishing industrial parks for import and export trade.

This initiative is evident at the Oshikango Border Area where Government, with the assistance from the EU funded the development and management of industrial infrastructure of the EPZ Park to host and accommodate companies that engage in light manufacturing and re-export trade to Angola.

Settlements such as Omafo, Engela, Onhuno, Ohangwena and Oshikango, grouped under Helao Nafidi Town Council have benefited significantly from cross-border trade with Angola. This has in turn created job opportunities, increased service provision, generation of foreign currency earnings and revenue to the State from increased cross-border trade.

It has also heightened the establishment and proclamation of the Helao Nafidi Town, which is today one of the fastest growing towns in Namibia in terms of socio-economic growth.

Director of Ceremonies,

Our Government is committed to promoting these local economic activities and initiatives geared towards achieving economic growth, job creation, accelerating business development and growth as well as entrepreneurial development in our economy.

Our Government is equally convinced that SMEs are important sources of sustainable employment creation and are, therefore, crucial to the success of an enterprise economy, hence its commitment to the development of the SME sector.

In this context, the Government has devised deliberate programs aimed at promoting the development of the SME sector in our economy.

The Ministry of Trade Industry has various programmes and facilities in place to assist the SME sector to establish and grow their businesses. This includes the provision of affordable business premises for production and trading purposes aimed at enhancing SMEs' production capacities, and the Equipment Aid Scheme through which existing and aspiring entrepreneurs are provided with equipment on a cost-free lease basis.

I have been informed that some entrepreneurs from the five constituencies of Helao Nafidi have benefited from this scheme.

Government also provides financial assistance and advisory services to enable Namibian entrepreneurs to exhibit and sell their products at local and foreign markets from which I have also been informed that some local businesses from here have benefited.

Director of Ceremonies,

In order to ease access to finance, we have supported the establishment of the SME Bank. We will continue supporting its activities to develop our local SME sector.

Similarly, the Government is planning to construct a Dry Port at Oshikango which will give numerous advantages with respect to Namibia's trade with Angola. It will also ease the current traffic and storage challenges of containers, and will complement the current warehousing facilities at Oshikango.

Plans are also under consideration to build additional warehouses at Oshikango in the coming financial years. You are, therefore, encouraged to make use of these facilities once they are completed.

Director of Ceremonies,

The provision of these services and programs are aimed at helping our local business people and SMEs to get their businesses off the ground. As a nation, we need to do more to help them improve the quality of their products and the operation of their businesses.

Therefore, I urge the private sector, especially the financial institutions to assist our SMEs in terms of easy access to loans and other services that can bring improvement to the SME sector so that they can contribute effectively to our national economic development.

Director of Ceremonies,

I have no doubt that with Government and private sector support and the willingness of our people to work hard, there are great prospects for development in all parts our country. I am equally confident that this exposition will create many opportunities to SMEs in Helao Nafidi and other SMEs in our country. I am confident that this exposition will create business opportunities that will lead to the improvement of the livelihood of our people.

With these words, it is now my distinct honour to officially declare the Helao Nafidi Annual Business Expo 2013 open.

I thank you