



# **REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

**REMARKS BY HON. LUCIA IIPUMBU, MP  
MINISTER OF INDUSTRIALISATION AND TRADE**

**ON THE OCCASION OF  
OMAHEKE EMPLOYMENT CREATION CONFERENCE**

**WEDNESDAY, 07 JUNE 2023**

**VENUE: OMATEKO CONFERENCE CENTRE,  
GOBABIS**

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**Director of Proceedings: Mr. Pecka Semba – CRO: Omaheke Regional Council**

**Hon. Netumbo Nandi – Ndaitwah – Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations**

**Hon. Pijoo Nganate: Regional Governor – Omaheke Region**

**Hon. Marius Sheya – Governor of Kunene Region**

**Hon. Ignatius Kariseb: Chairperson – Omaheke Regional Council**

**Hon. Augustinus Tebele – Regional Councillor – Gobabis Constituency**

**Dr. Thomas Abanga - Founder/Chief Executive Officer: ABANGA Group, Ghana**

**Omaheke Employment Creation Conference Preparatory Committee**

**Captains of Industries**

**Distinguished Invited Guests**

**Members of the Media**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Good Morning,**

It is my greatest pleasure to be in your midst today to witness the official opening of the **Omaheke Employment Creation Conference 2023**. Thank you very much for the invitation to be a part of this important conversation this morning.

Allow me at the onset to congratulate Omaheke regional leadership and all their esteemed stakeholders for organising this conference to deliberate and chart a clear path in terms of addressing the rampant levels of unemployment in the country and in Omaheke region in particular. I further wish to extend a special acknowledgement and welcome to Dr. David Abanga and the business delegation from Ghana while appreciating them for honouring our invitation to come to Namibia and share their business experience with the business community in Omaheke.

This dialogue is of significance given that there is a lot of pessimism both globally and within the Namibian economy in terms of attaining the kind of growth that we require to create jobs, reduce inequality and poverty but importantly to reignite economic activities in our own situation.

The themes for this conference pertaining to “***regional approach towards employment creation***” resonates with the overall challenge of unemployment across the country. It is therefore our hope that the outcomes over the next few days deliberations will reinforce the interactions in line with other activities spearheaded by Government at national level aimed at developing businesses, assisting youth groups and other stakeholders because this is the time where none of us can do it alone, it will take a collective to finding a real and tangible lasting solution.

This is a time to start focusing on what needs to be done at a grassroots level because invariably what happens or does not happen at a micro level will determine our economic path. All these determine the right eco-system, as a result of government’s initiatives created. It has become clear that business owners especially our youthful startups do not want to hear about plans and promises but action and implementation. They want to see milestones indicating that we are actually trying to achieve the objectives that we have set. This is a time where courage is needed to convert ideas to implementation and learn the harsh and sometimes exciting lessons of what implementation has to teach us.

It is therefore pertinent to demonstrate to all Namibian citizens that as Government, we have the best interest at heart and that the benefits of what we do accrue to citizens. What we are saying is that we need to re - engineer our economy to speak to the realities on the ground. Many of the discussions you will have are going to build on the strengths that we have, one of which being that we have strong political will and drive to address the challenges.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

The government is fully aware of the need to urgently address this problem of unemployment and keen to initiate a paradigm shift, while being cognisant of the country’s fiscal space. There is a great need to target sectors with high potential for employment with sustainable growth especially in Omaheke region such as transport, tourism, livestock production, charcoal production, and manufacturing. The need to facilitate transition to formality of the non-formal activities is also critical to consider.

There is a crucial need to consciously integrate economic and social objectives upfront and ensure that social and employment objectives are not subordinate to narrow economic imperatives. Critically, it is important to acknowledge that people should be put at the centre of development (human development), and decent work should be an overarching priority across all macro and sector policies.

The Namibian Government is cognisant of the importance of smart partnership to foster deliberate interventions to achieve socioeconomic development. This stresses the importance of combined joint efforts by all stakeholders to address the challenge of unemployment. This conference is testament to the region's vision to identify new ideas and trends that shall harness our capabilities, to deliver more benefits to our people.

The Ministry of Industrialisation and Trade (MIT) as the custodian Ministry for business development in the country continues to look at various avenues of assisting our business growth and development in order to create jobs. During the current financial year, the Ministry will roll out support programmes and facilities, aimed at assisting the SME sector to establish and grow their business in Namibia targeting especially our youthful population.

The Ministry's Equipment Aid Scheme programme, has received limited funding with the aim of assisting SMEs and startups to acquire manufacturing equipment needed to increase their production potential and technical capacity – in order to establish a solid manufacturing base, through a competitive SME sector.

In addition, there are other Ministerial support initiatives such as Industrial Modernisation Upgrading Programme (IUMP) and Strategic Development Goal (SDG) Facility which will further assist SMEs in product development, standards, labeling, packing and marketing of their product, while the Ministry equally assists SMEs with capacity development and training on basic entrepreneurship, financial literacy and business modelling under the Empretec programme.

From the Policy framework front, the Ministry is working tirelessly to finalise the following to mention but a few legislations among others, Informal Economy and Entrepreneurial Policy, Special Economic Zone Law and the Namibia Investment Promotion and Facilitation Bill which we intent to undertake consultations in the next few days here in Gobabis hence allow me to pause here and extend an invitation to the Omaheke Business community to join us for these important engagement on 16 June 2023.

Namibia a country has subscribed to the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), one of Africa's blueprint and master plan for transforming the Continent into the global powerhouse of the future. To this end MIT has developed the implementation strategy and Action Plan 2023 – 2027 detailing all gaps and reforms needed to seize optimal opportunities presented by the agreement.

It is therefore important for all stakeholders to initiate collaborative avenues in order to allow various entrepreneurs and enterprises to scale their products and seek further market access provided under the AfCFTA. The success of these instruments is pegged on our productive capacity as country to infuse the much needed products in the continent wide African market and create the much needed jobs.

I therefore urge Omaheke businesses to work closely with the relevant government ministries, offices, agencies and private stakeholders to promote their products beyond the borders of this region and to attract more national and international investments especially from those that we can tap valuable opportunities and know-how to enhance our economy.

Let us therefore hold hands collectively and continue to drive the developmental agenda of our country in addressing various economic challenges facing us.

**I thank you.**