



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

SPEECH BY HON. LUCIA IIPUMBU, MP

MINISTER OF INDUSTRIALISATION AND TRADE

ON THE OCCASION OF THE DRAFT SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE BILL

(SEZ), NATIONAL INFORMAL ECONOMY, STARTUPS AND

ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT POLICY (NIESED), NAMIBIA

INVESTMENT PROMOTION AND FACILITATION REGULATIONS

AND NATIONAL COOLING STRATEGY

VENUE: Leo Shoopala Hall, Oshakati

DATE: Monday, 25 March 2024

Programme Director;

Hon. Elia Irimari – Governor of Oshana region and all Hon. Governors

Present

Distinguished Invited Guests

Distinguished Captains of Industries

Our Esteemed Businesses at all levels

Public Participants present;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen

I stand before you today with great enthusiasm as we gather for this crucial public consultation on four key policy and legislative framework documents with a main aim to gain the much needed inputs from all of you here. We are specifically seeking your valuable contributions on the draft Special Economic Zone Bill (SEZ), National Informal Economy, Startups and Entrepreneurship Development Policy (NIESED), Namibia Investment Promotion and Facilitation Regulations and National Cooling Strategy.

These legislations holds the potential to shape the economic landscape of our country and pave the way for significant growth and development. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to each one of you for participating in this discussion, as your insights are invaluable in shaping the future of our economic policies.

Firstly, the concept of Special Economic Zones has proven to be a catalyst for economic transformation in various parts of the world. By creating designated areas with favorable business conditions and incentives, governments aim to attract both domestic and foreign investments, foster innovation, and generate employment opportunities. Today, we embark on a journey to tailor this concept to our unique needs and aspirations as a country as we strive to have it as a law to replace the Economic Processing Zone (EPZ) which brought about various challenges.

As we delve into the provisions of the SEZ Bill during the presentation by the technical officials, it is essential to recognize the potential benefits and challenges it may present. The establishment of Special Economic Zones can significantly boost industrialisation, enhance export capabilities, and stimulate economic growth especially as we are readying ourselves to participate fully in the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

At the same time, we must address concerns related to environmental sustainability, labor rights, and the equitable distribution of economic benefits across our country. The four O – regions including Kunene remain strategic in terms of benefiting from the SEZ regime given their proximity to our neighbouring countries in terms of the ease of exports of products from the designated zones. We must therefore use this law to ensure that we create an avenue for value addition to our resources to create the much needed jobs.

We must consider all social implications of SEZs, ensuring that the economic benefits are shared equitably among all segments of society. Moreover, the SEZ Bill should be crafted with a forward-looking approach, incorporating measures to promote innovation, research and development, and the integration of new technologies. By doing so, we can position ourselves as a hub for cutting-edge industries, attracting both domestic and foreign investments that will fuel our economic progress.

Secondly, our government recognises the invaluable role that the informal economy plays in our nation's economic landscape. The men and women who form the backbone of this sector contribute significantly to our GDP, create employment opportunities, and foster innovation. Today, we come together to chart a path that not only recognises the importance of the informal economy but also seeks to empower and uplift those who operate within its realms.

One of our key objectives is to provide a conducive environment for startups and entrepreneurs to thrive. We understand that they are the engines of innovation, driving economic growth and job creation. This policy therefore aims to create a supportive ecosystem that encourages the birth and growth of new enterprises, ensuring that they have the necessary resources, mentorship, and infrastructure to thrive.

We are committed to fostering an inclusive and sustainable entrepreneurial culture. This policy will address the unique challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, young startups, and those from marginalized communities. By promoting diversity and inclusivity, we aim to unlock the untapped potential within our society and build a more resilient and dynamic economy.

In order to achieve these goals, the government through the Ministry of Industrialisation and Trade (MIT) is implementing a series of initiatives, including but not limited to financial support through our Equipment Aid Scheme and Industrial Upgrading Modernisation Programme, Entrepreneurial mentorship by engaging in a robust transformational change by unleashing the growth potential of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in Namibia through entrepreneurial mind - set change and skills training; as well as provision of a comprehensive range of business advisory services under our Empretec programme, start – up Namibia Centre and Gemstone Cutting and Polishing centre in Karibib to mention but a few.

Thirdly, the Ministry is at an advanced point in finalising and enacting the Namibia Investment Promotion and Facilitation Bill which was comprehensively consulted including in these regions. Today we present the regulations to provide detailed guidance and specific rules for implementing and enforcing the broader principles outlined in the law. While the law set out the legal framework and establish general principles, regulations serve as a means to operationalise those principles, ensuring that they are applied consistently and effectively.

MIT is committed to fostering a conducive and attractive investment climate for the prosperity for all in Namibia. The regulations we discuss today will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of our nation's economic landscape. Namibia, with its abundant resources and untapped potential, stands at the threshold of a new era of growth and development. Our government is fully aware that attracting both domestic and foreign investments is key to unlocking this potential and driving sustainable economic progress.

These regulations are designed to create an environment that encourages and supports investment, streamlining processes to make it easier for businesses to operate in Namibia while ensuring that there are checks and balances in terms of investments portfolios and compliance. We understand that a transparent, predictable, and investor-friendly regulatory framework is essential for attracting the capital necessary for infrastructure development, job creation, and technological advancements.

Key aspects of these regulations include providing clear guidelines for both domestic and foreign investors, ensuring protection of their respective rights, and establishing mechanisms to address concerns. We aim to strike a balance between creating a favorable business environment and safeguarding the interests of our citizens.

Through extensive consultations with various stakeholders, including industry experts, local businesses, and international partners, we have sought to incorporate diverse perspectives into the drafting process. Your input are invaluable, and we are committed to refining these regulations to address the dynamic needs of our economy.

Lastly, the importance of cooling technologies cannot be overstated, especially in the face of rising global temperatures and the increasing frequency of extreme change in weather patterns. Our National Cooling Strategy is therefore designed to not only meet the growing demand for cooling but to do so in a manner that aligns with our country's commitments to environmental sustainability and climate resilience.

As we deliberate on the components of this strategy, we must consider the economic, social, and environmental implications. The cooling sector has the potential to be a driving force for innovation, job creation, and economic growth. Simultaneously, we must be cognizant of the environmental impact of various cooling methods and technologies, striving to minimize our carbon footprint and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect the Ozone.

Energy efficiency will be at the forefront of our strategy. We must explore and promote technologies that prioritize energy conservation, reducing both costs and environmental impact. This includes advancements in building design, the promotion of smart cooling systems, and the integration of renewable energy sources such as the green hydrogen into cooling infrastructure.

Let me therefore encourage each of you to actively participate in today's discussions, sharing your perspectives, concerns, and recommendations. This platform is an open dialogue and collaboration, and your input will contribute to the refinement of all the documents we are presenting here today to better serve the interests of our country at large.

In conclusion, let us seize this opportunity to shape the future of our economic landscape collaboratively. The success of this Bill, Regulations, Policy and Strategy lies in our collective efforts and the wisdom we gather from diverse viewpoints. Together, we can create a framework that not only attracts investments and stimulates economic growth but also upholds our values, protects our environment, and promotes inclusive prosperity

I thank you.