



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

**BY**

**HON. BISHOP (EM.) DR. ZEPHANIA KAMEETA, MP  
MINISTER OF POVERTY ERADICATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE**

**AT**

**THE WORKSHOP ON SOCIAL PROTECTION IN NAMIBIA**

***“TOWARDS A COMPREHENSIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM FOR  
NAMIBIA”***

**SWAKOPMUND, 21-23 AUGUST 2018**

- Honourable Cleophas, Mutjavikua, Governor of The Mighty Erongo Region,
- Honourable Paulina Ndahafa Nashilundo, Mayor of the City of Swakopmund
- Ms. Rachel Odede, Representative of United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)
- Mr. Baimankay Sankoh, Country Director for the United Nation World Food program (WFP)
- Representatives of Other United Nation Agencies here present,
- Ms. Esther Lusepani, Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare,
- Advocate Vicky Ya Toivo, Special Advisor, Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation,
- Mr. Tony Sisule, Social Protection Expert based at the Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare,
- Senior Officials from Government Offices, Ministries and Agencies (OMAs) here present,
- Religious leaders here present
- Representatives of Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organizations,
- Distinguished Invited Stakeholders
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good morning to you all

1. It is for me a great honour to officiate at this important workshop, which will deliberate on social protection, an issue so crucial to the course of poverty eradication.
2. Social protection has been at the core of the Namibian Government's development agenda, since the attainment of independence, 28 years ago. When we adopted the Namibian Constitution, we committed ourselves to set our people on a path that would lead them from a society based on inequality to a society that promotes social justice and restores human dignity, particularly for the poor and marginalised.

3. In the Namibian context and to a larger extent in the African context, social protection refers to a set of policies and programs designed to eradicate poverty, vulnerability and inequality among the people, especially the poor and vulnerable.
4. Social protection in modern Namibia is founded on its unique history as a nation with a strong sense of sharing community from ancient times and the unity Namibians exhibited in the epic struggle that defeated colonialism and apartheid.
5. The protection that we accord to those who are poor and vulnerable in our society, defines the greatness of our nation. Social protection policies in the colonial and apartheid era were discriminatory with people of similar circumstances getting different state benefits based on their race. All that ended and our post-independence system provides for an equitable social safety net. The Government views social protection as an important component in the wheel of progress for Namibia to overcome inequality to achieve prosperity for all.
6. His Excellency the President, Dr. Hage G. Geingob has led the Government in emphasizing unity of purpose to achieve prosperity for all. The Harambee Prosperity Plan aims at uniting Namibians to pull together in one direction to build an inclusive nation where all can prosper.
7. The Harambee Prosperity Plan envisages absence of hunger through improved agricultural production, establishment of the Food Bank, school feeding and provision of emergency relief. It calls for consolidating social grants into a more effective and well-coordinated safety net.
8. It aims to spur competitive vocational training and increase opportunities for transition of youth into work. It also requires more access to serviced land and affordable housing as well as improved energy, water and transport infrastructure.
9. The plan fits well into the long-term Vision 2030, the development framework for Namibia to become a high-income, industrialised, equitable, politically stable and harmonious nation. Strategies to achieve these goals are clearly laid out in National Development Plan and the Blue Print on Wealth Redistribution and Poverty Eradication.
10. Namibia is one of the few African countries with a comprehensive and mostly if not entirely Government-funded social protection system, which includes the Basic State Grants (Old Age and Disability Grants), Child Welfare Grants and War Veteran Grants, School feeding programmes, Disaster Risk management Programme, Food Bank programme and The Namibia Student Financial Assistance programme, to mention just a few.
11. The efforts of the Government to implement all these social protection programmes is in line with Article 95 of the Namibian Constitution which provides for the maintenance of the well-being of the Namibian people, through the enactment of Laws and Policies that are aimed at *inter alia*: improvement of health, gender equality, and social justice, provision of grants for senior citizens, employment creation and environmental stability.

12. Statistics have shown significant coverage of the poor, vulnerable and marginalised through the implementation of these various social protection policies and programmes of the Government. During the previous financial year the coverage for the pension and disability grants stood at 96% and 70% respectively. The child grants and the school feeding programmes have been recorded to cover about 34% of all Children in Namibia. The newly launched Food Bank programme reached more than 15,000 households during the 2017/18 financial year. The Ministry is currently busy rolling out the Food Bank to other regions, outside the Khomas region, which started off as a pilot.
13. All these efforts by the Government and other stakeholders are meant to help Namibians cope with the risks that they face with regard to climatic uncertainties, childhood deprivation, youth unemployment, low incomes, inadequate empowerment of women and the needs of senior citizens. In addition, evidence has also shown that, the support provided to beneficiaries covered under some of these programmes, does not only benefit the direct beneficiaries, but spills over to the dependents of the beneficiaries.
14. One can imagine life without these assistance, the situation could be worse! Social protection in Namibia therefore has some best practices that the rest of Africa and the world can learn from. Our social protection programmes are having impacts on eradicating poverty and contribute to lessening inequality.
15. Having said that, it is important to note that the Namibian social protection systems remain fragmented and exclusive. There are a number of poor, vulnerable and marginalized Namibians who are not covered by the current social protection systems. A typical example is when a vulnerable child reaches the age of 16, he or she falls out of the social protection system, unless such a child is disabled.
16. In this regard, the Ministry through the Blueprint on wealth redistribution and poverty eradication, will explore mechanisms of rolling out a grant scheme for the unemployed, poor and vulnerable that are excluded from the current social welfare grants. Such a basic income will empower our people and help them to develop themselves. It will also provide those living in extreme poverty with choices and allow them to diversify their life supporting systems; and to cope better with unforeseen circumstances such as climate change and other related shocks.
17. Furthermore, there is more that can be done beyond the ambits of social protection. For instance, young people need support to acquire skills that enable them to find decent work or provided with the necessary start-up capital to start their own enterprises. Women and men who wish to do business need a more enabling regulatory environment and equitable access to credit, services and procurement opportunities. Social grants should reach more children. Modalities to implement the National Pension Fund to supplement the old age pension should be considered seriously.
18. One of the interventions of the Blueprint on Wealth redistribution and Poverty Eradication, is to develop a Social Protection Policy Framework. The Social protection policy framework will provide guidelines on improving coordination, monitoring and evaluation of various social protection programmes and also creation of an integrated social registry.

19. It is therefore on this basis that the Ministry is hosting this workshop on social protection, in order to provide guidance for the formulation of the Namibia Social Protection Policy.
20. The workshop will present the analysis of social protection in Namibia, allow for discussions and inputs. It will further accord stakeholders an opportunity to consider various policy options, discuss advantages and limitations. The discussions will provide recommendations to guide the development of the Social Protection Policy framework for Namibia.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

21. Before I conclude, please allow me to thank our strategic Partners, the European Union Social Protection System (EU-SPS) for the technical support that they provide to the Government of Namibia, through the Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare, toward the reform of Social Protection in Namibia.
22. They have assisted in appointing Social Protection Expert (Mr. Tony Sisule) to spearhead Social Protection Reforms for which we envisage to develop a social protection policy for Namibia.
23. In the same vein, I also wish to thank the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), for supporting the Ministry in hosting social protection workshops (the first workshop was hosted in May 2017 and the second one being the one we are hosting today). Without our partners support, we would not be where we are today and thus, not realize our vision of prosperity for all.
24. As we are all aware, poverty eradication not exclusive to the Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare. Therefore I would like to acknowledge the support from all Government Offices/Ministries/Agencies (OMAs) and other stakeholders; and for availing their officials to be part of this important workshop on social protection. Without your support, our efforts to eradicate poverty will not be possible.
25. I therefore trust that this workshop will successfully discuss social protection issues and provide a way forward for the Government to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of social protection in order to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality and ensure prosperity for all Namibians.
26. With these few remarks, it is my pleasure to declare this workshop officially open and to wish you all fruitful deliberations.

**I thank you**