



Republic of Namibia

OPENING STATEMENT

AT

**THE REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON THE SOCIAL
PROTECTION POLICY AND DECENTRALIZATION OF
SOCIAL WELFARE FUNCTION**

BY

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**MINISTER OF POVERTY ERADICATION AND SOCIAL
WELFARE**

17 June 2019 – 11 July 2019

- Honourable Regional Governor
- Your Worship the Mayor
- Honourable Chairperson of the Regional Council
- Honourable Regional and Local Authority Councilors
- Esteemed Leaders of Traditional Authorities
- Heads of Government Offices, Ministries and Agencies
- Heads of State Own Enterprises
- Representatives of Non-Governmental Organisations
- Representatives of Civil Society and Faith Organizations
- Representatives of Community Based Organizations
- Distinguished Invited Stakeholders
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning to you all.

Honourable Governor, Distinguished stakeholders

1. I am glad that we are all gathered here today to deliberate on the draft Social Protection Policy that aims to address vulnerabilities, tackle social exclusion and eradicate poverty. In addition, the Ministry will also consult on the intentions to decentralize the social welfare functions.
2. It is well known that ever since independence Namibia has been faced with challenges of high levels of inequality and poverty. Although significant decline in poverty has been observed, inequality however still persists. This situation restricts economic growth and reinforces itself through high levels of unemployment, triggering economic and social risks to the vulnerable ones of our society.
3. In efforts to address those social and economic challenges the Namibian Constitution and related legislations make provision for social protection or social security under Article 95, of Namibia Constitution and Chapter (11) on ‘Principles of State Policy’.

Honourable Governor, Distinguished stakeholders

4. The Constitution of Namibia requires the state to actively promote as well as maintain the welfare of people and create equal opportunities. The Constitution exhorts the state to safeguard the dignity of people, create equal opportunities for women, protect children, support the

unemployed and indigent, ensure decent work, and provide regular pensions to the elderly.

5. In line with the Namibian Constitution, the Government of the Republic of Namibia is currently implementing social assistance programmes such as: Old Age pension, Disability, Veterans and Children grants; Disaster relief, Food Bank, School Feeding, Free Primary and Secondary Education, Social housing and Marginalized community programmes. This is clear evidence of the government's commitment towards addressing poverty and inequality.

Honourable Governor, Distinguished stakeholders

6. Allow me to quote from His Excellency Dr. Hage G. Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia during his inaugural State of the Nation Address, when he stated that: *“The introduction of targeted social safety nets, including old age pensions and social grants for people living with disabilities as well as for orphans and vulnerable children have played a significant role in reducing poverty levels in Namibia”* end of quote. There is thus great and urgent need for us to strengthen and expand our social protection systems, in order to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty amongst the most vulnerable of our society.
7. Namibia's social protection system is regarded as comprehensive when compared to many systems in Africa, most especially in Southern Africa. However, our systems are still largely fragmented and exclusive, with a lack of

effective synergy of social protection policies and programmes, hence the need for social protection reforms.

8. To address the identified drawbacks, His Excellency the President of The Republic of Namibia, Dr Hage G. Geingob, through the Harambee Prosperity Plan (HPP), tasked the Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare to investigate the feasibility of consolidating the social grants into a more effective coordinated safety net, and to strengthen efforts in creating a comprehensive and integrated social protection system.
9. The Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare responded to the call by His Excellency as per our mandate to coordinate the drafting of Social Protection Policy. The policy aims to address the identified drawbacks.
10. The process of developing the social protection policy framework is led by a Core Team on Social Protection consisting of experts from some of the following Offices/Ministries and Agencies: Office of the President, Office of the Vice President, Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare, Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, Ministry of Health and Social Services, Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation, the Social Security Commission Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Innovation, National Training Authority, Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

11. The draft Policy adopts a broad view of social protection as composed of: social assistance, social insurance, social welfare services and labour market policies as well as a broad range of public and private instruments to enable Namibians to manage risks, cope with vulnerabilities, eradicate poverty and reduce inequality.
12. Most of the interventions and programmes in the draft policy are not new but require strengthening, acceleration, enhance coverage and adequacy in order to address the basic needs of our people and lift them out of abject poverty.

Honourable Governor, Distinguished stakeholders;

13. I do not want to pre-empt the technical presentation that will be made , but just to highlight that the implementation of the Social Protection Policy will be geared towards achieving the following ten (10) broad objectives:
 - Universal maternity grant and health coverage.
 - Universal child and disability grants.
 - Employment creation and empowered women and youth.
 - Sustained old age and disability income security.
 - Improved food and nutrition security.
 - Inclusion of marginalized people.
 - Affordable housing.
 - Integrated social registry and services.
 - Enhanced coordination of social protection.

- Improved monitoring and evaluation of social protection.

14. The draft Social Protection Policy is proposing a dual approach to social protection, in that it recognises that certain social services such as health cover should be universal; while on the other hand there is a realisation that universal transfers that are available for all people in a category irrespective of their income such as the old age pension in Namibia are more adequate and contribute significantly to poverty eradication and reduction of inequality.

15. We recognize the importance of regional structures in development and the eradication of poverty, hunger and reduction of inequality at the grassroots level. Therefore, distinguished stakeholders, this policy will not be complete without your valuable contributions.

Honourable Governor, Distinguished stakeholders;

16. The Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare will also consult with the management of the Regional Council on the decentralization of certain processes of the social welfare function.

17. As I conclude, I urge all of us to engage in extensive discussions, in order for us to craft an inclusive and realistic Social Protection Policy, that will assist Namibia to eradicate poverty by the year 2025 and beyond.

I wish you all fruitful deliberations and I thank you.