



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF REGIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND
HOUSING

SPEECH

By

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OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE WEB SITE OF THE
MINISTRY OF REGIONAL & LOCAL GOVERNMENT
AND HOUSING
FRIDAY, 30TH NOVEMBER 2001
PARLIAMENT GARDEN

SPEECH BY THE. MINISTER OF REGIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING, Hon. NICKEY IYAMBO ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF THE OFFICIAL WEB SITE OF THE MINISTRY OF REGIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING

FRIDAY, 30TH NOVEMBER 2001

Mr of Ceremonies

The Honourable Chairman of the National Council Comrade. Kandy Nehova

Hon. Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Konjore

Members of Cabinet present

Members of Parliament

Regional Governors

His Excellency Ambassador Kevin J. McGuire of the United State to Namibia

Members of the diplomatic corps

Councillors

Ladies and Gentlemen.

First of all, I would like to thank the Honorable Chairman of the National Council for this invitation to jointly launch my Ministry's Web Site and the Parliament Mobile Training Unit.

I would also like to thank all the invited guests for joining us this evening to witness a new era in our efforts to develop our beloved country, Namibia.

The presence of all invited guests today as well as the presence of both the Ministry and Parliament staff to this official launch would indeed greatly assist in spreading the message that information is power and that promoting access to information has become a universal duty and responsibility for all.

We, at the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing have seized the opportunity and today you will witness the Ministry joining the rest of the world wide web (www) information family.

Today, different individuals and institutions have developed their web sites, Today, millions of people all over the world are connected through this innovative phenomenon, While others might consider us late comers, we have had the opportunity to learn from the experience of those that joined the world wide web in the past, we have shared their experience, we have analyzed the benefits and costs associated with this new internet revolution, and what we will be launching today is a product born out of hours of research, hours of hard work and endless hours searching for a mechanism that will assist, not only the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing, but a mechanisms that will serve as a tool for the efficient implementation of government policies at national, regional and local levels, among them the decentralization policy and its programmes.

Master of Ceremonies, distinguished guests. Information is power, there is no question about that, however, information only becomes knowledge when it has been transferred.

The Ministry through the technical advice and support of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) has developed a

mechanism, a modern tool that will facilitate the transfer of information between the different tiers of government at a speed faster than the speed of light one may say. The Ministry has allocated resources for this purpose and today we are witnessing the fruits of our investment.

The Ministry has taken the initiative, the technology is in place and the regions are being connected. However, the information contained on the web site and the facilities available in the Intranet will only be useful if the regions start using the technology. This information will only become knowledge if all stakeholders in the decentralization, democracy and development process play a role in transferring and sharing this information.

This infrastructure will not perform miracles, this technology is just a tool and if utilized to its maximum potential, government will save tax payers money, through a reduction in travel by utilizing the Video Conferencing equipment. As we are launching this project today, we have some regions connected and they are watching us live in real time.

If we utilize e-mail to its full potential, government will save taxpayers money on postage even though the Post Office will complain of being deprived of revenue.

If this tool is utilized, in particular instant messaging, government will save the tax payer money on telephones.

In embracing this technology and the concepts behind it, there are a lot of other benefits that translate into a reduction of government spending, thereby providing savings which will be used for other developmental

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projects. For example, a member of staff going for a meeting to a distance region for two days cost the government about \$5000 if you calculate transport and accommodation. If you factor the individuals time, this amount will increase.

With the technology in place, travel will be reduced; meetings will take place in real time with real faces using our video conferencing equipment.

Communication and sharing of information will take place in real time using our Intranet.

Inter-regional cooperation will increase as all the regions acquire the infrastructure to communicate and share information.

What we are launching today is not just another web site, we are launching a practical tool, we are launching a system, this is a launch of a new community, a community that does not know regional boundaries, a community that does not recognize distance, regardless of where you are, Keetmanshoop or Canada, you will remain a part of this community in real time, this is a community that does not know time differences, and this is a launch of a new Online Community available 24 hours a day and seven days a week through the Internet and our Regional Network, or "REGINET" in short.

Master of ceremonies, I have spoken about my Ministry's initiative, I have spoken about the technologies being deployed and I have spoken about the potential and the expected results.

But my Ministry is aware that this initiative will not succeed if our people do not have the technology to access all this information and transform it into knowledge.

My Ministry is aware that this initiative will not succeed if our people do not have the skills necessary to utilize this infrastructure. This initiative will not succeed if our people do not understand the benefits of this technology and indeed this initiative will not succeed if the Ministry is left alone.

Master of Ceremonies, distinguished guests, I am honored today to have partners like the National Council and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), who have embraced the vision of the Ministry and turned it into a practical reality, this is evident in what you are seeing today.

I am indeed honored to have the support of the Government of the United States of America, who have supported my Ministry and this initiative in particular through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Dear friends, this is a difficult time for our friends, brothers and sisters in the United States, but what we are witnessing today is triumph, good over evil, the problems in America are problems for the rest of the world, but today we are witnessing that even in difficult times, we continue to receive support and assistance from the United States Government. We are indeed grateful for this continued support.

Through this support, today Namibia is the first country in Africa with video conferencing facilities in all its administrative regions; Namibia is the

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first country in the region to have a Mobile Computer Training Unit that you are seeing behind me to be launched by Comrade Kandy Nehova this evening.

Together, we are committed to deliver services to our people, we are committed to sustain democracy in our country and we remain committed to develop our nation.

The Government of Namibia has two very important concerns, which have historically been denied to the majority of the people – democracy and development. While all our national endeavors are directed at achieving an even higher state in these respects, there is none as crucial for the attainment of these noble objectives as decentralization, which we committed ourselves to by constitutional provision.

Decentralization provides an opportunity for people to have access to relevant participative decision making and extending democracy to people as a right based on national ideas and values.

Bearing this in mind, skills development is therefore an integral part of our Ministerial goal, and the partnership with the National Council and USAID, through NDI will go a long way in achieving this goal.

Although the Government of Namibia places a very high degree of importance on decentralization, democracy and development, there are a number of severe opposing forces such as poverty, lack of skills, HIV-AIDS, which is robbing us of the skilled people that our country has produced.

In addition, there is also a severe opposing force and that is the "human factor." Government has created a policy environment conducive for the successful implementation of decentralization. The perception that the regions do not have the capacity to take over responsibilities from the center is one of the negative forces, capacity is created, it is never discovered or found.

Furthermore, the perception that the regions do not have infrastructure, infrastructure is created, it is never discovered or found. What we are witnessing today is an illustration of the initiatives of my Ministry and the Governors of all the 13 regions of Namibia. This is an illustration that the regions are not just ready, but they are far ahead.

The website that we are launching today will be a key link for interaction and co-operation by the different players that I mentioned earlier – including the family, the social worker, the educator, the church, the law enforcer, the courts, the politicians, the technocrats, etc. I am confident that it will expand the areas of co-operation between central, regional and local governments in the on-going task of eradicating poverty, advancing democracy and ensuring speedy service delivery and development.

This website, newly launched this evening, will be regularly updated in terms of information, quality control and technical features. This is the task of a steering committee that has been formed in my Ministry to ensure that the site remains current. As they proceed with their task, may I thank my Permanent Secretary and his team for this splendid job. I would also like to thank USAID for the steadfast support through NDI in advancing democracy in Namibia.

To Parliament, I say congratulations to Comrade Kandy Nehova and his team, this is the kind of partnership that will develop this country, this is the kind of partnership that we would like to see others emulate at the national, regional and local levels. This is what the electorate has mandated us to do, and we are committed to deliver.

I thank you