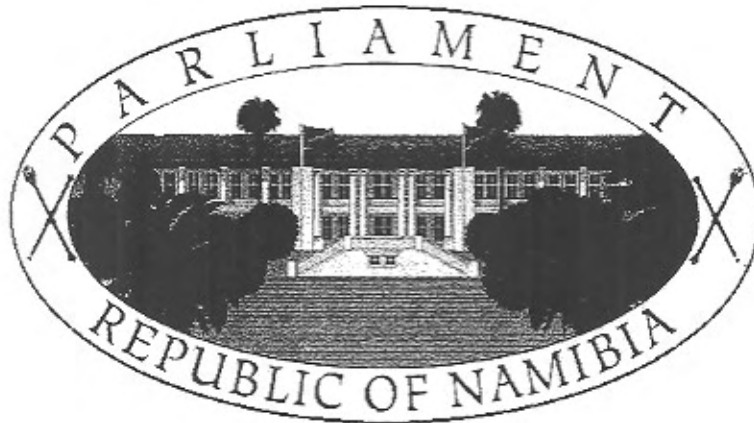


REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

REMARKS BY
DR MOSÉ P. TJITENDERO, MP
SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL DINNER IN
HONOUR OF DELEGATION OF SENATORS FROM
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

THURSDAY, 28 AUGUST 2003

WINDHOEK

Director of Ceremonies
Hon. Ministers and Deputy Ministers
Senator Mike DeWine and Delegation
Hon. Members of Parliament
Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Members of the Business Community
Members of the Media
Ladies and Gentlemen

I, and indeed the people of Namibia feel very honoured and privileged to be the host to such a dignified quests from the United States of America.

Dear Senators from the USA, your visit to our Republic came at a very crucial time when the world is faced with many challenges. However, due to the advances in international political and economic relations, the world is continually becoming a better place to live in. This gives us the strength and the hope to keep striving for a better future.

Apart from major differences in policy especially on Iraq, Zimbabwe and the creation of the International Criminal Court, political and diplomatic relations between Namibia and United States of America can be described as stable and improving, taking into account the wide spectrum of links, and areas of co-operation which presently exist between the two countries. We hope that your visit to our country will renew the excellent bilateral relations that exist between the two nations. It is through this kind of exchange, that we as leaders can strengthen regional development as envisaged in the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), the USA Millennium Challenge Account, US-SACU Free Trade Agreements and the Emergency Plan for HIV/AIDS Relief Act. The USA is one of Namibia's biggest donor, and channels assistance to Namibia on various fronts, including that of economic development, HIV/AIDS prevention and other fields of co-operation.

We welcome the inclusion of Africa, and in particular Namibia, in both President Bush's International Mother and Child HIV Initiative and the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief signed on March 2003. I understand that our Minister of Health and Social Services has briefed you accordingly about the situation and our efforts in Namibia, and we are looking forward to hear and learn from the various expertise and assistance as the whole world is facing the same challenge.

Ladies and Gentlemen, far back in 1995, The Parliament of the Republic of Namibia was the first Parliament in the Southern Africa region to

acquire a full network of computers. This was made possible through the pioneering spirit of our partners, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), through a grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has been supporting Namibia's development efforts since independence in 1990. We are glad to hear that the USAID's bilateral presence has been extended, as their impact on development is still needed.

Last year in May 2002, I led a multi-party parliamentary delegation on a study mission to the United States Congress, the States Department and various other interest groups within Washington DC. The Study mission was conducted in conjunction with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), and was undertaken with the view to conducting consultations with our American counterparts and to strengthen our relationship. I would like to use this opportunity, through you, to thank our counterparts, for the warm welcome we received and the fruitful discussion we had.

As I speak, the Parliament of the Republic of Namibia is at the forefront of e-Governance as a tool for democracy and development. Our vision is to ensure that the Namibian society acquires the necessary access to technology and the required skills to fully benefit and reap the fruits of a networked and global society.

Today, our Parliament is among the leading Parliaments in the world using ICT as a tool for democracy. This was confirmed in 2001 when our information management system was ranked number 1 in Stockholm, Sweden. The recent World Bank report has also highlighted the pioneering efforts of the Namibian Parliament in the field of e-government.

You realised that as we are eating, we are viewing videos on my regional visits around the country. These regional visits were born out of a need to familiarize the citizens with the democratic and legislative structures of a newly independent Namibia. During the regional visits, a large number of communities received training on the Parliament Website, and some communities were left with a donation of computer equipments acquired an e-mail address and internet access. Again, all of these mentioned success stories could not have materialised if it was not for the continued support of our partners, both USAID and NDI, including the crucial role

played by our private sector partners. This is a practical example and a true spirit of what is called 'Smart Partnership.'

Despite these efforts, access to computer equipment remains one of the biggest challenges facing the majority of our communities. In order to address this situation, Parliament once again mobilized its cooperating partners and to date, Microsoft Corporation has pledged support in the form of computers and cooperation to ensure that the technological needs of our schools and communities are addressed and we have already started with the implementation of pilot projects in some of the schools around the country.

I'm mentioning all these successes as an illustration of the well-established relationship between our two countries and to emphasise the need for the continuation of our partnership.

The African Continent is going through many changes, and challenges as we entering the 21st Century and latest developments on the continent are testimony to that. Our OAU was last year transform into the African Union. This body is the equivalent of the EU and it will play the role of realising the African Dream. During the visit of The United States President to the African continent, our African Head of States were meeting in Maputo, Mozambique to map out the way forward of the African Union. The launching of NEPAD, and the establishment of the Pan-African Parliament are other positive development on our continent. Namibia is committed to the principal of African ownership of NEPAD, and stressed that Africa must remain the driving force of this initiative.

Dear Senators, let me emphasis that we also need to strengthen our relationship between our Parliaments. This can take the form of attachments, exchange programs between our members and staff. Technical support to our Parliament will be also welcome to make sure that democracy will stay rooted in our society. We must also strengthen our trade and investment opportunities, scholarships and exchange programs between our countries.

Lastly, I can assure you that the people of Namibia are committed to democratical principles, respect for human rights, good governance and respect for our rule of law. With these few remarks, dear colleagues and friends, welcome to the Land of the Brave and I wish you all the best.

I thank you.