



**Remarks by U.S. Ambassador Dennise Mathieu
To Celebrate USAID assistance to Namibia's Democracy and Governance Sector
Moringa Room, Kalahari Sands Hotel, Windhoek
23 June 2008**

Thank you for joining us today to celebrate 13 years of USAID assistance to strengthen Democracy and Governance (DG) in Namibia. When you look at the achievements of our Democracy and Governance program, one thing is clear immediately: it's been about partnerships. Partnership between the U.S. Government and Namibian NGOs; between the U.S. Government and community media; between NGOs and the Namibian Government; and, increasingly, between NGOs themselves. In the United States, we believe that partnership between civil society and governments is essential for democracy to flourish. We rely on civil society and the media to inform both our citizens and our elected policy makers.

Looking back 13 years ago, to the beginning of the Democracy and Governance program in Namibia, USAID initially interacted with just a small number of NGOs. Over the past 3 years, however, USAID worked with over 65 civil society organizations. This increase in private citizen political activity is a tremendous endorsement of democracy in Namibia.

Several of the organizations with which we have worked are here today to celebrate our mutual success. And a great number of examples have already been cited that detail the many accomplishments of the DG program. I'd like to highlight one success story in particular because I believe it illustrates how civil society, under the Zero Tolerance for Corruption program, has begun to pass the torch of democracy and good governance to Namibia's youth.

This year, the Namibia Institute of Democracy – in partnership with the Anti-Corruption Commission – has focused on teaching Namibian secondary school students the importance and value of integrity and fighting corruption. Since the beginning of 2008, integrity-related school workshops have been conducted in the Erongo Region and in the Hardap Region. Altogether, the NID has conducted 20 workshops in 18 secondary schools and trained 2,312 students.

Congratulations to NID and to **all** of our partners for the outstanding work you have done. I'm proud that the American government and people have been able to support your efforts to consolidate democratic gains and strengthen key institutions in

Namibia. As a result, average Namibians have used their voices and exercised their rights in the public domain.

I urge you to continue on this path because, as we all know, democracy is process that must be nurtured and sustained. In the long run, the strength of Namibia's democracy and the quality of its governance will be defining elements for the country's future stability and success.

Since 1991, USAID has been a dependable development partner in Namibia. During the past 17 years, USAID has contributed over U.S. \$250 million to support Namibian efforts to improve Basic Education; Small and Medium-sized Enterprise development; Community-Based Natural Resource Management; HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis prevention, care and treatment; and, of course, Democracy and Governance. As we move forward, however, there will be a change in the strategic focus of USAID assistance. USAID will now focus on what is regarded by many to be Namibia's greatest health and development challenge – fighting the dual HIV/AIDS and TB epidemics.

Although the USAID Democracy and Governance program will now come to an end, the United States Government remains committed to the continued development of democratic institutions and practices in Namibia. We stand ready to assist whenever possible with support for electoral processes, the media, the judiciary, and civil society, through our other activities. Continued progress on democracy and governance will reinforce the effectiveness and durability of our significant investments in health care, economic development, and education.

I'd again like to congratulate our main Democracy and Governance partners – the Namibian Parliament, the Namibia Democracy Support Center, our NGO partners, and last but not least, the Namibia Institute for Democracy, which has been successful in attracting a donor to fund their continued democracy work started under USAID's DG program. You all have a strong foundation upon which to continue building a vibrant, inclusive, and tolerant democratic nation that hopefully will serve as a model in the sub-region and indeed all of Africa. We appreciate your important work and wish you continued success in the future.

Thank you.