

ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. SAM NUJOMA, FOUNDING PRESIDENT AND
FATHER OF THE NAMIBIAN NATION, ON THE OCASSION OF THE 2ND NATIONAL
LAND CONFERENCE

THEME:
TOWARDS A COMPRENHENSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE LAND REFORM IN NAMIBIA

1 – 5 OCTOBER 2018

SAFARI COURT HOTEL

WINDHOEK

KHOMAS REGION

***Check Against Delivery**

Directors of Ceremonies;

Your Excellency Dr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia and Madam
Monica Geingos, First Lady;

Your Excellency Dr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, Former President of the Republic of Namibia
and Madam Penexupifo Pohamba, Former First Lady;

Your Excellency Dr. Nangolo Mbumba, Vice-President of the Republic of Namibia and
Madam Mbumba;

Your Excellency Dr. Nickey Iyambo, Former Vice-President of the Republic of Namibia and
Madam Iyambo;

Right Honourable Dr. Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, Prime Minister of the Republic of
Namibia;

Right Honourable Nahas Angula, Former Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia;

Honourable Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia
and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation;

Honourable Professor Peter Katjavivi, Speaker of the National Assembly;

Honourable Margareth Mensah-Williams, Chairperson of the National Council;

Honourable Peter Shivute, Chief Justice;

Comrade Sophia Shaningwa, Secretary General of the SWAPO Party;

Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers;

Distinguished Service Chiefs;

Your Excellency Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Distinguished Representatives from Neighbouring Countries and those far afield;

Distinguished Veterans of the National Liberation Struggle;

Esteemed Religious and Traditional Leaders;

Distinguished Members from the Civil Society;

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Fellow compatriots, allow me to stand by the Protocol established if I omitted anyone;

It is a great honour for me to have been invited to this historic Second National Land Conference in our country held under the theme; *towards a comprehensive and sustainable land reform in Namibia*.

This Conference could not have come at the better time for us to assess our achievements as far as land reform is concerned and deliberate on the current land reform programme and other emerging land related issues to pave the way forward for a transformational and empowering land redistribution process in order to redress the historical injustices of the past.

I hope that in this 2nd National Land Conference our nation will be engaged in a robust and open debate that will consider increased agricultural production, food security and socio-political stability in our country.

Fellow Namibians;

This Conference takes place 27 years after the First National Land Conference which was held on the 25th of June 1991. As I stated at the beginning of that Conference, the land question in Namibia was one of the most burning issues facing our young nation then and this is true today as it was yesterday because the land question was central to the Struggle for National Liberation.

I am therefore glad that the 2nd National Land Conference aims, among others, to review progress on the implementation of the resolutions of the 1991 Land Conference. Another objective is to identify challenges as well as propose strategies to address the challenges encountered during the implementation of the 1991 Land Conference's Resolutions.

I am also glad that the government undertook regional consultations countrywide and accorded our people an opportunity to make their inputs into the Second Land Conference's Agenda.

Fellow Namibians;

To give an overview of what transpired in 1991, about 70 percent of our population derived their livelihood from the land, either as communal farmers, private owners of commercial farm land or workers on such farms.

In addition, thirty six point two million hectares of the total agriculturally usable land in Namibia was owned and utilized by only four thousand and sixty four individual farmers, while more than one hundred thousand families had access to only thirty three point five million hectares of total land suitable for agricultural production, commonly referred to as communal land.

It is against this background that it was with dismay that I have come to learn that, currently, foreigners still own two hundred and fifty farms. These comprise of one million two hundred and six thousand and seventeen hectares of land according to the Statistics of September 2018 released by the Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA).

It is also with dismay that I have learnt that 70% of the land is still owned by previously advantaged Namibians while 16% of private agricultural land is owned by the previously disadvantaged Namibians. In the meantime, government only owns 14% of the agricultural land mainly due to the unjust and exorbitant pricing of land turned into Close Cooperation (Cc).

Fellow Namibians;

The trend on land ownership I have narrated above should no longer be allowed to continue by the current generation. We need, as Namibians, to unite and work together and adopt a **severe, comprehensive and sustainable** agrarian land reform in order to address the massive imbalances of land ownership in Namibia.

Our first step should therefore to start with the review of some constitutional provisions in order to address land ownership in the country. For this reason, the constitution of the Republic needs to be amended through a referendum. It is only through this way that the state can own the entire land in the country including the agricultural commercial land.

Indeed, I strongly believe that land should belong to the State and no foreigners should be allowed to own commercial farm land in Namibia. This is what we agreed upon in the First National Land Conference and that mechanisms should be put in place to speed up the expropriation without compensation of land belonging to Absentee Landlords.

However, there are those who are suggesting that such commercial farm land, owned by foreigners, should be expropriated in the public interest provided that a fair and just compensation is given for the infrastructural development that has taken place on the farm.

Similarly, the First National Land Conference resolved that given the difficulties in redressing ancestral land claims, restitution of such claims in full is impossible. I also agree that the issue of ancestral land claims should not be entertained.

As Namibians, we fought for the total emancipation of our country and its territorial integrity. Namibia is a unitary state and every Namibian citizen is allowed to resettle anywhere in the country as provided for by our country's constitution.

In the same vein, those who are concerned that the Land Reform program to be discussed at this Second National Land Conference will result in white farmers being stripped of land to the detriment of the economy, there is no truth to this claim and it should be rejected as any change in this regard will not compromise the food security and economic growth in the country. I should again emphasize here that Land must belong to the State to be administered by the Government in accordance with our country's needs.

In addition, we need to address the unjust urban land arrangements in order to resettle and build decent accommodations for all our people. In this regard, we can expropriate, in the public interest, the land closer to our towns and city including the land owned by local authorities.

Furthermore, I agree with those who are suggesting that we should define what development means and not forget that the majority of our people derive their livelihood

from farming in communal areas. I therefore strongly suggest that we should not turn all communal land into urban centres and should also consider the issue of evictions of farm workers.

It is a pity that there are those who withdrew from this conference as I would have wanted us to build consensus around these issues through a robust debate.

Nevertheless, I am hopeful that our discussions will take place in a frank manner that will provide the government with suggestions and recommendations with which to formulate an adequate national policy on land reform in our country in line with the theme of this conference.

Let me reiterate here that this should be done considering increased agricultural production and food security as well as the transformation of the unjust arrangements in urban centres of our country.

In conclusion, I wish you fruitful deliberations in a spirit of One Namibia! One Nation; Nation Building and Reconciliation. As I always say *“A people united, striving to achieve common good for all members of the society, will always emerge victorious”*.

Long live the Republic of Namibia!

I thank you.