



**ACCEPTANCE SPEECH  
BY  
H.E. HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBWA,  
PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA  
ON HIS  
ELECTION AS  
PRESIDENT OF THE SWAPO PARTY**

Comrade President Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma,  
Distinguished Comrade -delegates:

I am overwhelmed by the decision of the SWAPO Party rank and file to elect me as flag-bearer of our vanguard organization, the SWAPO Party.

Allow me, dear Comrades, to congratulate Comrade Hage Geingob, Comrade Pendukeni Iivula-Ithana, and Comrade Nangolo Mbumba, on their election as Vice President, Secretary-General and deputy Secretary-General of the SWAPO Party, respectively. I would also like to congratulate the Comrades elected to the Central Committee and the Political Bureau. You all deserve appreciation for the vitality of your contributions to the Party over the years, the vastness of your individual experiences and vision and the vigour of your commitment to national unity.

Elections are about choices. It is, therefore, crucial that we respect the democratic right of those who may have voted for alternative candidates or those who have been campaigning for a particular candidate. Through exercising our freedom of choice, we have strengthened the democratic culture which the SWAPO Party fought for and which we are busy consolidating. We must, therefore, respect the choices of our Comrades and in the process refrain from personalising and divisive tendencies. Solidarity and the pursuit of common objectives should continue to be the hallmark of the SWAPO Party programmes during the next five years.

For the first time in the history of our Party, the responsibility of leading and steering the Party is changing hands. It is a responsibility that I accept with a profound sense of humility. It is an honour to lead this Party.

I joined the nationalist movement through conviction, because of what I believed it would do for the oppressed and dispossessed people of Namibia. I have not wavered in that conviction. You have put your trust in me and I vow to you I shall repay that trust with unstinting service and dedication to our Party and our country.

Together, as progressive and dedicated cadres of the SWAPO Party, we must continue to build a Party for a new and changing world, while not losing sight of the noble ideals that 47 years ago resulted in the founding of SWAPO by visionary and brave sons and daughters of Namibia. Let us remember them and continue to cherish their noble ideals and heroic achievements. Let us draw courage and hope from their convictions and be proud of what we are and what we stand for.

There is only one way we can repay the debt we owe to our fallen martyrs. There is only one way we can repay those men and women who, under the banner of SWAPO, took the first steps in a long and bitter struggle for our freedom and independence. Our task is to ensure that the Party in which Peter Eneas Nanyemba, Tobias Hainyeko, Moses //Garoeb, Brendan Simbwaye, Putuse Apollus, David Merero, Nathaniel Maxuilili, Hanganee Katjipuka, Milner Thlabanello, Anton

Lubowski, Gertrud Kandanga, Dimo Hamaambo, and many others believed and to which they gave their lives would continue to remain a united party truthful to its founding principles.

Today we have countless patriots who continue to be torchbearers of a cause and Party that they joined more than forty years ago. They remain committed and steadfast flag-bearers of the legacy of the historic nationalist movement.

Today, I pay tribute to the living legends of our struggle led by Sam Nujoma and other leaders such as Herman Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, Simon Mzee Kaukungwa, Helao Vinia Ndadi, Ben Amathila, John Otto Nankudhu, Hage Geingob, Libertina Amathila, Ngarigutuke Tjiriange, Nahas Angula, Theo Ben Gurirab, Hendrik Witbooi, and many other Comrades who continue to guide and lead our Party.

Forty seven years ago we chose to put our trust in Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma to lead the struggle. That he did with distinction.

Seventeen years ago, at independence, we, yet again, chose to put our trust in Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma to lay the foundation for an independent State of Namibia and to serve as the first President of our Republic. That he did with distinction.

He gave our country something important and our Party something precious. He showed the Namibian people that serving the people is an ideal to live up to and breathed hope into our movement. During the most trying moments and harrowing episodes such as the Cassinga massacre, Comrade Nujoma displayed sterling leadership, courage and bravery while constantly reassuring the Party rank and file that the final victory was certain. What he is seen as representing is indeed the crowning achievement of his life.

I know I speak for everyone in this hall, in our Party, and in our country, when I say that we wish him good health and a happy life. At the same time, let me reassure you, Comrade Nujoma, that I accept your offer availing yourself to the service of our Party and to, when need arises, advise us and work with me and the new leadership in the advancement of the cause of our Party and country.

The achievements of Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma throughout the years of his illustrious leadership should inspire all Namibians, in particular, SWAPO Party members to emulate his self-sacrifice. We must endeavour to uphold the legacy of President Nujoma by continuing to maintain unity within our Party.

Let me also pay tribute to my comrades in the SWAPO Party, those in the rank and file, the Central Committee, and the Political Bureau for having given me immense support, as one of the leaders of the SWAPO Party over the years. I thank you most sincerely.

I will continue to count on contributions and collective wisdom of the entire Party leadership as we embark upon the second phase of our struggle, which is economic development.

It will now be my task to continue to ensure that our collective energy and resources will be devoted to the speeding up of programmes and projects to improve the quality of life of our people in the cities, towns, settlements and villages all over Namibia.

Your decision to elect me as President of SWAPO Party comes in the wake of your equally humbling decision to nominate me as Presidential candidate during the 2004 SWAPO Party Extra-Ordinary Congress which culminated into my election as Head of State. This orderly transition process demonstrates the maturity and capacity of our Party.

Your decision to elect me as Party President, is a further demonstration of your conviction that we can only achieve peace and sustainable development if we remain united for a common cause and work towards the well being of all our people knowing too well that as Namibians we have a common destiny.

Let us continue to nurture our policy of national reconciliation in recognition of the fact that the pain, suffering and the wounds that were inflicted by the war will take time to heal. The protracted war that SWAPO waged to free our motherland, had its casualties. Many may have suffered unduly. At times, brother was set against brother, father against son and mother against daughter. We must recognise that the policy of national reconciliation will not serve its purpose if our people remain caught in the throes of hunger, unemployment and disease. Economic reconciliation is the bedrock for social justice.

Without social justice we will not be able to create a just and fair society. A just society is where all citizens are having access to basic opportunities to enjoy well-being and the fulfilment of life. That is access to decent education, employment, housing, health, land, other infrastructures and amenities. Anything less will result into conflict and social strife with a high risk to destabilize political and social harmony.

Now, more than ever, we must be united. Just as unity was vital in the liberation struggle, it still is very important for the implementation of our common objectives. It is only in so doing that we will be able to address our needs and fully exploit our potential. A divided community spends valuable time in internal wrangles that can only sap its strength and ensure its failure.

Adherence to strict Party discipline has always remained critical to the inner life of our Party. The Party must continue to speak with one voice. All public pronouncements, activities and actions that have a bearing on the Party should be carried out in close consultation and coordination with the leadership.

It is only through tolerance, mutual respect and the respect for the Constitution of our Land as well as that of our Party that we can move forward. Differences in opinion should not become irreconcilable.

We are the Party that brought about freedom to our country. We are the Party that made it possible for a new Namibia to re-enter the community of world nations. We are the Party that through supreme sacrifices paved the way for freedom, peace, and prosperity.

The task before us is that of moving forward with the second phase of the economic reconstruction and development so as to create wealth for our people. However, the legacy of the long history of colonialism and apartheid will not be undone in a short period of time. We are faced with resource limitations and it will take time to complete the task and to reach all those in need. However the Government will continue to aggressively pursue programmes aimed at fast tracking socio-economic development.

We will do everything in our power to accelerate job creation through the promotion of value addition, manufacturing and the promotion of small-and medium enterprises. Equally, we will continue to pay special attention to education and vocational training in order to ensure that we prepare our children for the workplace and not for street corners.

Now is not the time for complacency or to dismantle the foundations we have laid under the visionary leadership of the founding father of our nation President Sam Shaafiishuna Nujoma.

Now is the time to go further, to take the steps forward for greater achievements.

Now is the time to continue positioning ourselves, as a Party, to withstand any challenge, perceived or real, that may threaten our very existence. That we owe to ourselves and to our fallen comrades.

Dear Comrades, I am ready to serve. I am honoured to lead the SWAPO Party.

Long live the SWAPO Party!

I thank you.