



SPEECH DELIVERED

BY

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ON BEHALF OF

HON. PENDUKENI IIVULA-ITHANA, SECRETARY
GENERAL OF SWAPO PARTY

AT THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE VOTER EDUCATION
CAMPAIGN BY ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF NAMIBIA

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WINDHOEK

Solidarity

Freedom

Justice

**Director of Ceremonies,
The Right Hon. Prime Minister Nahas Angula,
Chairperson of the National Council, Hon. Asser Kapere,
Chairperson of ECN, Mr. Victor Tonchi,
Leaders of Various Political Parties and NGOs Present Here,
Director of Elections and CEO of ECN, Mr. Moses Ndjarakana,
Distinguished Invited Guests,
Fellow Namibians,
Members of the Media,**

Permit from the onset me to quote few lines from one of the greatest African writers, Chinua Achebe, who pronounced in his masterfully crafted book, ***“Things Fall Apart”***, and I quote, ***“When the center cannot hold....things fall apart”***, unquote.

I started my engagement with this incisive and advisory quote from Chinua Achebe, precisely to unpack and dissect certain issues that pertain to Namibia’s young democracy, and the place of Namibian citizenry in sustainable development of Namibia’s democracy. It must be noted that having united the overwhelming majority of Namibians in the struggle for independence, the possibility was created in 1990 for us to work together practically to construct a society that cares for all.

In strengthening and deepening democracy and democratic culture in Namibia, we have as a Ruling Party and Government continued our efforts to inculcate and instill the culture of democracy amongst our citizenry, first with the decolonisation of our minds and the democratization of our

institutions. It has been always argued by various African scholars and academics that the post-colonial Africa suffered from the crisis of democratization and governance and continued to use colonial institutions and policies, hence zero development in some spheres and in other instances, complete paralysis of state institutions and the erosion of the rule of law.

In our country, democracy and equality before the law were entrenched in our constitution. It must be noted that our twenty years of freedom have been twenty years of growing unity in action; twenty years of peace and stability; twenty years of increasingly making resources available to uplift the standard of life of our people; and twenty years of expanding opportunities to build a better life for all our people. This is the historic angle through which we must try to locate '**Celebrating 20 years of Democracy, Peace and Unity**', as your theme suggests today in contemporary Namibia, amidst harsh global economic and financial environment. The creation of the Ministry of Justice, the Office of the Attorney-General, Ombudsman, Legal Assistance Centre, the independence of judiciary, and a healthy working is indicative a serious commitment to democracy.

Above and all, SWAPO Party as the Ruling Party in Namibia, deriving its mandate from the overwhelming majority of our people has the sacred duty to mobilize and unite all Namibians irrespective of race, gender, class, and status behind the struggle for economic emancipation. This historic and evolutionary task for liberation from poverty and underdevelopment remains on top our Development Agenda. Therefore the mandate of the

SWAPO Party is to achieve this objective as stated before, while doing all that is possible to strengthen and deepen the national democratic victory achieved in 1990.

In this precise regard, it is the mandate and challenge of the SWAPO Party and its Government to be at the forefront of the promotion of social, political and economic development and the norms, values and good practices under the banner of solidarity, freedom and justice.

Director of Ceremonies,

Over the past twenty years, we have ensured that there is a continued protection of political and civil rights. As a Ruling Party we have ensured that there is a zero rate or prevalence of authoritarian tendencies, and tampering of electoral processes. Democracy, sometimes used as a euphemism for "good governance," is an integral part for economic development, a guarantor for peace, and a value that is crucial for the unity of our people. However, it must also be noted that the building of democratic societies depends on the existence of a leadership that understands and embraces democratic ideals, political institutions that are repository and guarantor of democratic values, and civil society and international actors playing specific and clearly defined roles.

In this instance, I wish to submit that Namibia's peace and democracy depends on all stakeholders such as: a patriotic civil society to Namibia and understanding international partners.

In my considered view, civil society ought to be regarded as the foundation of liberty, agents for promoting political values, and advocates for social justice, democratic participation and good governance. Civil society can play an important role in democratic consolidation if they remain voluntary, self-regulating, and autonomous of taking cue from external donors, which decides what they must say and do and subscribes to sets of common rules that guide and regulate their activities.

In its advocacy role, civil society movements could act as channels through which citizens articulate their interests, particularly in situations where political parties are weak, disorganized and represent factional politics rather than competing ideologies. Instead of being partners in crafting alternative policy agenda, were the government might not have financial and human capital to effect change, some of our civil society organisations have assumed an unmandated duty of instigations against our leaders, spend lot of time and energy on covert activities against the State and is now known for producing and publishing mass propaganda material in concert with known and unknown forces and interests groups. At best they act as the spokesperson of such forces and groups.

Director of Ceremonies,

It is instructive to note that heavy reliance of some civil society organisations, especially those that have strategically projected themselves as 'political parties', on foreign support does not augur well for the consolidation of peace and democracy that we enjoy today.

This is particularly so because this relationship is creating a dependency syndrome that is detrimental in the long-term, as the democratic values and practices that are consolidated will be reflective of those of the foreign interests that support them.

In terms of promoting their own agenda, donors and patrons seem to be obsessed with elections and adoption of neo-liberal policies, as a condition for continued financial hand outs to some of the NGOs.

In final analysis, all things considered, what is the prospect for democracy in Namibia? In assessing the prospects for the consolidation of democracy in Namibia, we must be mindful of the fact that we are readying ourselves as a nation, for the Presidential and National Assembly Elections in November 2009. This means that the registration of political parties and the holding of multiparty elections have offered Namibians a hope for the future. Secondly, the civil society, the free press and the opposition have opened up considerable space for the consolidation of democracy and peace. The fact that when opposition parties lose elections they don't start civil and ethnic wars as it happens elsewhere, speaks volumes.

While acknowledging the high prospects for the consolidation of democracy in Namibia, we must also point out that it is a daunting challenge not only to develop and to preserve full democracy but also to maintain it.

It is an uphill effort that will require enormous political will, national discipline and sacrifice, and vast financial expenses to do that. But with good planning and careful advocacy, as shown with the introduction of a Mobile Parliamentary Kombi, which is taking parliament to the grassroots, genuine democracy will definitely continue to flourish in Namibia forever.

For the passed nineteen years, the center has been holding. The SWAPO PARTY government, as mandated by the overwhelming majority of our people, has been maintaining peace and tranquility in the country. Such a sackered responsibility can therefore not be sacrificed for any reason of expediency.

I thank