

NAMIBIA SOLD AS A BOUTIQUE COUNTRY IN DUBAI

Dubai, UAE – Namibian Trade and Industry Minister, Dr Hage G. Geingob, has invited business people from Dubai, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to explore the various sectors of the Namibian economy, such as tourism and mining with a view to investing in the country, he described as the “**Boutique Country**” due to its small population, yet distinct in quality of goods and services on offer.

Leading a powerful Namibian business delegation, Dr Geingob, told participants on Monday, at the start of the Namibia Week, Business Expo, taking place in Dubai, that it was a country worth investing in, because of its wide open spaces, and good infrastructure such as roads, let alone peace and tranquility.

He said that Namibia with a population of 2.1 million people was strategically placed between two giant economies of South Africa and Angola as well as other land locked countries, and was therefore best suited as a hub for all these countries. He added that Namibia’s membership to the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) provided an access to a combined larger lucrative and a competitive regional market of some 300-million inhabitants.

Whilst, both Namibia and Dubai, were mainly desert countries with small populations, the population of Dubai stood at 1.8 million. The country also relied on 2 billion consumers within a 4-hour flight, serving as trade and logistics hub, due to its strategic location, half-way between Asia, North Africa and Europe.

“The fact, that Namibia was able to attract various Heads of State from as far as Russia, China and Brazil, including Queen Elizabeth II and a Vice President of the United States of America, tells a lot about the country”, he said. He added that Namibia was endowed with natural resources such as diamonds, copper, gold and uranium.

Dr Geingob, explained that Namibia was a young democracy, making good progress in development, after a long bitter struggle for political liberation, which amongst others, included the freedom of speech and association.

He noted that Namibia, as a young democracy was committed to the rule of law, and successfully held six elections in the country, with only two, having being contested by the opposition parties recently. He added that the High Court of Namibia pronounced itself on the latter case, a few days ago, putting to rest the claims by the opposition parties, of alleged irregularities during the last National Assembly elections.

“This fact, shows that the judiciary is independent and that is why your investments and personal safety is guaranteed too”, he quipped. Dr Geingob, pointed out that it was therefore, important to make the electoral process fair and professional, to ensure that the losing parties accepted defeat.

He said “It is not fair for countries endowed with natural wealth, to have their people languishing in poverty, with only few benefitting from the wealth of the country.



Dr Hage G. Geingob, Minister of Trade and Industry, receives a gift from Rashed Bugara'a, Chief Operating Officer of Dubai World Central.

The recent incident in Egypt proved as a wake-up call to many countries, to pay attention to its people, especially the poor. We want to use our resources for the benefit of our people”.

However, the Namibian Trade and Industry Minister announced that the country’s Foreign Investment Act, was currently being reviewed in order to respond to the changing economic realities.

“We thought it appropriate to branch out to successful countries such Dubai, in order to tell Namibia’s story, a country whose Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been growing steadily, not too low and not too high, but have seen 4 to 5% average growth, since independence. However, that was not enough, we need about 7% growth of our GDP, as determined by SADC”, Dr Geingob, told the participants.

He said while, the European Union required a deficit of 5%. He added that 3% was ideal for Namibia. Dr Geingob, said the budget deficit was expected at around 7% this year, as the Government was committed to job creation and poverty reduction.

He said Namibia was rated as the 2nd most preferred African country to live in, after Mauritius, due to its prevailing peace, good infrastructure, health and education facilities, as well as the protection of investors.

Dr Geingob, said Africa only appeared in the western media, if riots, famine and all other bad things were prevalent, pointing out that in the absence of these, Africa’s good things would otherwise, not appear in the news. “The fact, that Namibia is not being covered in the western news, is therefore, good news in itself, hence no news is good news indeed”, he maintained.

Presentations on Namibia’s various economic sectors were made by amongst others, Tarah Shaniika, Chief Executive Officer of the Namibian Chamber of Commerce (NCCI), Digu Naobeb, Chief Executive Officer of the Namibia Tourism Board (NTB), and Bisey Uirab, Chief Executive Officer of Namport.

The Namibian business del-

egation held one-on-one networking sessions with their counterparts in Dubai.

The event was attended by a high number of Dubai’s media houses, including radio and television and the Gulf News, one of the most prominent newspapers in Dubai. Dr Geingob, also appeared live on prime time of Dubai One, the largest English television news channel in the United Arab Emirates.

The Namibian delegation also held meetings with top representatives of Emirates Airlines at their headquarters, to indicate Namibia’s interest to become an Emirates Airline passenger and cargo destination, especially the transportation of perishable produce such as dates and grapes from Namibia to Dubai.

However, the representatives of Emirates Airlines assured the Namibian delegation that they would look into the matter, and said that their airline was meticulous in their planning, as they were profit driven and thus, did not receive any subsidies from their government, instead posted dividends to their government. The delegation also visited Dubai World Central, an integrated logistics hub, which amongst others is set become the world’s largest passenger and cargo hub, with an annual capacity of 120-million passengers and more than 12-million tonnes of cargo.

Whilst at Dubai World Central, discussions also dealt on the need to create a scholarship fund, enabling Namibians to study in Dubai. Rashed Bugara’a, Chief Operating Officer of Dubai World Central undertook to pursue the matter with Dr Geingob.

The Dubai Global Expo Village has been described and be likened to “setting up a shop without a licence to expose, market, promote and sell unlimited quantities of products, from day one”. This provided a unique opportunity for entrepreneurs, including those from Namibia to exhibit and sell their products from day one of their participation. The Expo ends on Saturday afternoon.



The US veto of Middle East Resolution: A huge crater on the Diplomatic Quartet Middle East Road Map

By Jeroboam Shaanika

When Barack Obama won election as the first African American ever to ascend to the position of President of the United States, I remember cautioning the misguided optimists then that they should not expect him to be their saviour. On Friday, 18 February 2011, the United States vetoed a UN Security Council Resolution that was to condemn all Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territory since 1967, as illegal.

The US Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Susan Rice defended the action of her country saying “while the US agreed that the settlements are illegitimate” she felt that “the resolution harmed chances for the [stalled] peace talks”. The vetoed resolution would also have called upon the Israelis and Palestinians to continue with negotiations on final status issues, within the time frame specified by the Middle East diplomatic Quartet (United Nations, Russian Federation, United States, European Union), and would have urged the international community as well as regional players to intensify their support for the road map.

What the resolution wanted to achieve was to complement the efforts of the quartet and not to complicate them. However, the US views the matter through its own mirror of interests and arrives at the conclusion informed only by its own desires. It is not the first time the veto has been used and one may add that it is not only the US that had resorted to blocking the adoption of a UN resolution through the use of veto; other Permanent members have used it on other occasions.

While the usage of the veto has been on decline, its usage is unreflective of today’s geopolitical realities. It is even more worrying when used to shield a country, which acted or acting in defiance of international law. Clearly, the construction of settlements by Israel on illegally occupied lands is unacceptable and is a clear and present danger to peace. The Quartet road map is gradually turning into a long and exhaustive circle with no destination. At a time when most of Arab countries are undergoing street revolutions, no one can accurately predict the nature of the regional configuration to emerge, once the dust settles.

On January 9, 2011, three Israeli bulldozers demolished a wing of the famous Shepherd Hotel in occupied East Jerusalem to make room for new 70 settlements. This appears to be calculated political strategy aimed at creating obstacles, which in the future, will make it impossible to divide Jerusalem as a future shared capital of two States. It is actions like these that are likely to heighten tensions and compromise peace in the region.

The UN Security Council was however united in sending a clear message to Israel that the international community’s patience over its provocative actions is stretched thin. All other 14 members of the Security Council voted in favour of the resolution, which demanded that “Israel, as the occupying power, immediately and completely ceases all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem and that it fully respects its legal obligations in this regard.”

The response of Israel to the vote in the Security Council was like a misguided woodpecker that struck its beak so hard in the wood and unable to pull it out. The Israeli Ambassador to the UN, Meron Reuben, responded after the resolution was blocked that “the draft resolution should never have been submitted” in the first place. He added that “the road to peace is between Jerusalem and Ramallah, which are but 10 minutes apart,” yes, he might be technically right, but what he has forgotten, is that the road map he is referring to, has more potholes than the holes on a Swiss cheese.

Interestingly, the US and Israel are high on the tree of isolation, they need to come down, unfortunately the ladder to help them climb down has fallen to the ground. The international community is trying all its best to reach out and hold the ladder to enable the two to climb down from the tree of isolation.

In December 2010, when several Latin American countries announced their recognition of a State of Palestine, Israel in the words of its Deputy Foreign Minister Daniel Ayalon, dismissed the tsunami wave of recognition for the State of Palestine with the usual head in the sand approach that the state of Facebook was more real than the State of Palestine. The desire of the international community is for a viable and stable State of Palestine to live side-by-side with the State of Israel in the spirit of good neighbourliness.

This State should be created on the basis of the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, not the type of Facebook virtual state as suggested by the Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister. The hopes and aspirations of the people of Palestine continue to be suffocated by the Israelis with the US blindly looking the other way while preaching to the rest of the world about human rights. Recently it cheered the people inspired revolution in the Arab world and views these uprisings through its own subjective mirror image. The use of veto on an emotional issue is likely to send a message which could be used as footnote for the new emerging Middle East.

The people of Palestine deserve peace not settlements, the children of Palestine deserve to dream and grow up to be responsible world citizens and not to be perpetual resistance fighters or tunnel diggers. When would the US open its eyes and realize that the phrase “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness....” applies also to the people of Palestine. The people of Palestine too, hold the same truth just like everyone else in the world.

Now by blocking the UN Security Council Resolution which of the truth in the declaration of its independence do they believe in? The perpetual building of settlements by Israel does not bring liberty to the people of Palestine nor contribute to their pursuit of happiness. It contributes to mistrust and escalation of violence which ultimately will result in the loss of life.

Only when a viable and stable state of Palestine is created that Israeli security will be enhanced and both the Israelis and Palestinians will then start to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

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