

Namibia hands over SARPCCO chair with a smile

In August this year Namibia handed over the chairmanship of the Southern Africa Regional Police Chiefs' Cooperation Organization, SARPCCO, to South Africa. In this exclusive interview, Asser Ntinda of *Namibia Today* met one-on-one with Inspector General of the Namibian Police, Lt General Sebastian Ndeitunga, who spoke about the successes, setbacks and challenges recorded over the last year.

Question: What will you regard as your main achievements as outgoing Chairperson of SARPCCO?

Answer: For the first time SARPCCO has complied with all the resolutions that were passed at the 13th Annual General Meeting (AGM) when Namibia took over the Chairmanship of SARPCCO a year ago. This is also the first time that a chairman has visited all the member states of SARPCCO. The purpose of visiting all the member states was to verse the implementation of all resolution which were adopted at the last AGM.

We have set a high standard for all SARPCCO member countries. Many member countries will not match us on what we have done over the last year. We have put in place high standards, and there should be no drop in the standards we have set. We have also ensured that SARPCCO has aligned itself with the structures of the Southern Africa Development Community, SADC.

This issue has taken several years to materialize. Our Heads of



Lt General Sebastian Ndeitunga

State and line ministers have been asking us as to what the delay really was about. When I took over, I went to the SADC Secretariat to push the matter through. I had bitter words with the officials who were dealing with this issue. As we talk now, the necessary amendments to the SADC protocols and

SARPCCO Constitution have been effected. These amendments have been pending for years, but Namibia has managed to push them through within a year. By now they must have been approved by the SADC Heads of State Summit which took place in Kinshasa, DRC, recently. They are

now ready for implementation.

All the joint and multilateral operations like Operation Kalahari, Hornkranz, Kalambo and many others which were agreed upon at our last AGM have been carried out and a lot had been achieved. We have recovered stolen motor vehicles, firearms, drugs and copper wires. These were major achievements.

We have now handed over to South Africa. We are still a member of the Troika, which is made up of Namibia, Botswana and South Africa. All the training programmes which were on the SARPCCO calendar over the past 12 months in different countries to capacitate police officers in different fields have taken place. Such officers were trained on how to investigate high profile cases, intelligence, UN missions and so on.

Question: What were the challenges which you had to deal with as Chairman of SARPCCO?

Answer: When I took over, there was a trend of increasing drug-related cases, drug-trafficking from across the Atlantic coming into our region. Many of these cases happened when I was Chairman of SARPCCO. We have arrested many of these people. We must be proud because these are concealed crimes. Most of the traffickers were detected and arrested. We are networking in the region, particularly on intelligence infor-

mation collection and exchange. Before such suspects land in Namibia, we are already aware. This has helped the forces to promptly arrest such people.

Another worrying trend now is the theft of copper wires. Theft of copper wires and scrap metals is a highly organized crime. This organized crime is damaging our economy and our communication network. This category of crime affects all SADC member states. We are now busy trying to harmonize laws related to scrap metals, as well as laws dealing with the selling and buying of copper wires. We have made breakthroughs in many countries. In Namibia, we have arrested many of these people. There was a lot of recovery but we still have a lot of work to do to harmonize our laws in the region.

When we are in meetings, some people say that member states should emulate or imitate what Namibia and Botswana have in place in terms of legislation that facilitates the arrest of those who are involved in the stealing of copper wires and scrap metals. These are some of the challenges which SARPCCO faces. But we will overcome.

Question: Where is the market for stolen copper wires and scrap metals?

Answer: The market is in South Africa. We are busy working out strategies with our SARPCCO counterparts to ensure that our borders are not used as a transit for such organized crimes. We have warned our citizens not to buy stolen properties. We know that all stolen copper wires are destined for the South African market.

Question: SARPCCO is big, but it is little known by members of the public. What campaigns are you launching to make sure that it is known because people can only cooperate with you if they know what this body is all about?

Answer: You are right. During our tenure of office, we could have launched some sensitization campaigns to tell members of the public what SARPCCO is all about, what it does and what its objectives are. It is not too late though. Those who are now heading SARPCCO, and we as a member of the Troika, can still launch such campaigns.

The world is becoming a global village. We have Interpol – the International Criminal Investigation Organization. Interpol has united the world in the fight against transnational crimes and terrorist activities in the world. Regional bodies have their own police organizations, like SARPCCO, which unites all the police services in the SADC region. We are united under the umbrella of SARPCCO.

We study and analyze criminal trends in our region and strategize on how to deal with such trends. Our philosophy is that an injury to one is an injury to all. If a crime is committed in South Africa, we look at it as if it was committed here. We have a network through which we exchange information without delay. Our aim is to promptly detect, prevent and arrest. Interpol has given us modern technology to connect and act timely.

It is a matter of a minute for me to be informed by Pretoria or Harare that this and that is about to cross your borders or your space. On that, we take the necessary steps. Sometimes criminals are also aware and they delay. But at the end of the day, we get them. We are well-networked. As time goes by, we will improve on that

to ensure that we are ahead of the criminals.

You should know by now that criminals are also networking. They are organized. They pose as kind people, but they do so to hook in their criminal activities into our communities. To the public, give us tip and we will act. Fighting crime is a shared responsibility between the public and the police. We must all say enough is enough to criminal activities.

Question: As outgoing Chairman of SARPCCO, is there something which you think you could have done better, some grey areas which you think should be addressed?

Answer: Not really grey areas but tasks which should be implemented. SARPCCO activities go up to the end of the year. We handed over in August. There are some scheduled but unfinished programmes which my successor will implement. That is continuity. Some programmes are slated for November and December and have to be implemented.

We must also sensitize member countries. There are member countries who up to now do not understand what SARPCCO is all about. The allocation of resources to SARPCCO is a challenge. When we organize meetings and seminars, you find that some countries simply do not send delegates because they have not budgeted for such meetings or seminars. We want to see commitments on the part of the member countries in terms of resource allocation for SARPCCO.

Question: With SARPCCO in place, how do you see SADC, say five years from now? Do you think it will be a crime-free region?

Answer: Our target is to reduce the crime trend in SADC. We will never be a crime-free region. There are many factors that can be considered as fountain of criminal activities, such as poverty, disparities in income, immaturity, domestic violence and greed. People have no patience for settling internal conflicts, greed and so on. We are trying to reduce crime in SADC, particularly serious crimes. These are murders, drug-trafficking, robbery, domestic violence and commercial crimes which damage our economies in the region. We want to reduce priority crimes even by half and then build on that. We want to see a peaceful and stable SADC.

Question: What was your message to your successor?

Answer: I told him that SARPCCO is allergic to failure. In SARPCCO, we only know success. He should lead SARPCCO to greater heights. He should ensure that there is no drop in the operation and management standards we have set. We are ready to assist. We are with him.

Question: What is your message to the criminals in SADC?

Answer: The honeymoon is over. When generals speak, criminals should listen carefully. We are not going to wave to criminals hand-cuffed when we have our firearms. They shoot and kill innocent people. They should expect serious retaliation from us. I do not want to say reciprocity because that is a diplomatic word. They should repent before it is too late. We call on the judiciary to patch loopholes in our laws to ensure that criminals are properly punished. We have a duty to protect our country and its people. Our country's image should not be tarnished by criminals. Whoever tarnishes the image of our country, we should look at that person with red eyes.



ROAD FUND ADMINISTRATION



PUBLIC NOTICE

The Road Fund Administration (RFA) would hereby like to inform the public and especially its Mass Distance Charges (MDC) clients that Ms. Florence Billy, formally employed by the RFA as a fuel levy assessor, is no longer in the employment of the Road Fund Administration since May 2009.

The RFA started to investigate and also initiated disciplinary steps against Ms. Billy however, she opted to resign from the employment of the RFA before the commencement of disciplinary procedures. The RFA has laid criminal charges against her under CR No. 624/03/09 with the Namibian police, which charges are currently being investigated by the relevant authorities. Ms. Billy is being investigated for serious irregularities and alleged embezzlement of MDC fees but she opted to resign from the employment of the RFA before she could go through a disciplinary procedure to prove her innocence. Her case is currently being investigated by the justice system of the Republic of Namibia (Case Number 624/03/09 opened on 9th March 2009).

It has further come to the knowledge of the RFA and the RFA is reliably informed that Ms. Billy is now acting as a "consultant" to some operators advising them on the MDC calculations. The RFA wishes to strongly advise all MDC clients utilizing her services that they would do so at their own risk, at least until such time when the alleged corruption issues against her are finalised by the Namibian justice system. The RFA has not given permission to any third party to represent it in this regard. The RFA advises its MDC clients and operators to approach and utilise the services of the RFA staff members who are currently and actively in the employment of the RFA for their assistance, free of charge.

For Mass Distance Charges-related enquiries, please contact an MDC accessor at 061-378950 for assistance.

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