



**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. SAM NUJOMA,
FOUNDING PRESIDENT AND FATHER OF THE NAMIBIAN
NATION, ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF
THE ANNUAL OMAGONGO CULTURAL FESTIVAL**

SATURDAY, 27 APRIL 2019

**ONGANDJERA TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY HOMESTEAD,
UUKWANDONGO
OKAHAO CONSTITUENCY
OMUSATI REGION**

UNDER THE THEME:

"Omagongo Uuthiga Wetu / Our Heritage"

***Check Against Delivery**

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(Reg No 8208)

Director of Ceremonies;
Your Excellency, Dr. Nangolo Mbumba, Vice President of the Republic of Namibia and Madam Mbumba;
Your Excellency Dr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, Former President of the Republic of Namibia and Madam Pohamba, Former First Lady;
Right Honourable Dr. Saara Kuugongelwa–Amadhila, Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia and Mr. Amadhila;
Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers present;
Honourable Members of Parliament present;
Tatekulu Johannes Mupiya, Omukwaniilwa gwOshitunda shAngandjera;
Honourable Erginus Endjala, Governor of Omusati Region and other Governors present;
Honourable Councillor of Okahao Constituency and other Local and Regional Authorities Councillors present;
Esteemed Representative of UNESCO;
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
Esteemed Deputy Chairperson of the Council of Traditional Leaders, Tatekulu Immanuel /Gaseb;
Aasimanekwa Aakwaniilwa amushe nOmalenga Omanene nomashona gwOpamuthigululwakalo;
Aasimanekwa Aawiliki yOpambepo mwaholoka mpaka;
Distinguished Invited Guests;
Members of the Media;
Aakwashigwana yaakwetu mweya amushe kOshituthi shOmagongo;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am greatly honoured to have been invited to this auspicious occasion of Oshituthi shOmagongo or Marula Fruit Festival, here at Uukwandongo, pombala yoshilongo sh' Angandjera.

Indeed, Omagongo Annual Festival has been inscribed by UNESCO on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This was done during the Tenth (10th) Session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage that was held in Windhoek in 2015.

With this in mind, as it has been a tradition and in my capacity as the patron of Omagongo Annual Festival, I have been asked to say a few words on the theme: "*Omagongo Uuthiga Wetu/Our Heritage*".

Before that, I would like to commend the Ongandjera Traditional Authority for choosing this theme as it is an appropriate theme for this year's festival.

Indeed, cultural heritage is a vital part of the identity of who we are, where we come from and where we intend to go, not only as traditional authorities, but the Namibian nation as a whole.

However, we can only preserve our rich cultural heritage if we pass it on to succeeding generations. Indeed, it is through festival like this that we teach the young generation to be conscious about the values of natural resources like Marula fruits.

The Marula tree which produces fruits from where Omagongo is produced, occupies an important place in the heritage of the eight Aawambo communities in Namibia.

Our young children must know the whole process starting with how to care for the Marula trees and the gathering and processing of the fruits to produce Omagongo and other related products.

Our people get shade from Marula tree, the fruits (ongongo), the juice (oshinwa), the fermented beer (omagongo), the oil (Ondjowe), kernels as soup while with the wet branches this tree can be used to treat a cough, making the livelihood of our people to be revolved around the Marula tree in many respects.

It is therefore not surprising that our people picked the Marula season as a festival that should rotate among the eight (8) Aawambo Traditional Authorities such as Aangandjera, Aandongga, Aakwambi, Aakwaluudhi, Aakolonkadhi, Aambalantu, Aambandja nAakwanyama.

Director of Ceremonies;

Our cultural values and norms carry our African identity and that is why I would like to urge our older generation to ensure that we pass on what we know to the next generation.

In this regard, agricultural activities structured the seasonal calendar of Aawambo communities. In years of rainfall, the Small Rains fell through from September to November and this was when the first seeding commenced. When the seeds sprouted the sprouts were separated and re-planted in small mounds on heaps of dry land in order to protect them from the flooding rivers.

Weeding was done in the Summer lasting from November to February and the harvesting season lasted until the beginning of May. The ripening of each crop called for first-fruit ritual, **Oshipe**.

The first crop available was the fruit of the wild Marula tree of which omagongo was made especially in February and March between the Big Rains and the Harvest time from March until May. This was followed by the dry season lasting from May until August when cattle were allowed to graze.

I am worried that this agricultural seasonal calendar and pattern has been disturbed by climate change. We therefore need desalination plants of the sea water to mitigate the impact of climate change.

Similarly, Ohungi was an important and meaningful instrument in the life of communities to bequeath values and traditional norms to the young generation. When people in the household gather around the fire at **Oshoto/Olupale** for **Ohungi**, they recount collective memories and tell stories of hard work and bravery of our forefathers and mothers.

However, it is a pity that nowadays parents do not spend time with their children but rather utilize most of their time abusing alcohol at cuca shops and bars, especially the men. For this reason, the younger generation is forgetting and ignoring the significance of embracing our culture because of lack of proper cultural guidance to know who they are, where they come from and where they are going.

We must bear in mind that culture, traditions and customs play an important role in building the character of citizens and society.

I am therefore convinced that festivals of this type are a useful platform for celebrating our cultural diversity and have the potential to contribute to strengthening the unity of our nation, Namibia. It is precisely against this background that I encourage the elders to continue to teach our youth to appreciate the Marula trees so that they grow up preserving this proud heritage into adulthood.

In the same vein, we should preserve our historical sites as heritage for future generations to learn about our history. I have in mind places such as Fort Onamutoni in Oshikoto Region, and other historical site of traditional and cultural importance such as liti kiidhiluka in Uukwambi area and Onelungo ylinima yaKalunga in Ombalantu Traditional Authority in Omusati Region and other places of historical importance.

Similarly, I wish to encourage our young people to innovate creatively on how to quickly produce Omagongo so that together with its by-products they can be marketed outside of Namibia.

This adds value to these natural heritage products and have a significant impact on the socio-economic conditions in the rural areas of our country.

To do this, we must commit ourselves to plant more Marula trees, not only to ensure continuity, but also to have more trees on a larger scale to produce more Omagongo.

In conclusion, allow me to register my sincere appreciations and commend the Ongandjera Traditional Authority and in particular Omusimanekwa Tatekulu Johannes Mupiya, Omukwaniilwa gwOshitunda shAngandjera for hosting this year's Omagongo Cultural Festival.

Allow me also to commend the Organizing Committee for the thoughtful and excellent preparations and for making today's occasion a resounding success.

As I have stated on numerous occasions, a nation without culture is like a tree without roots. I would therefore like to encourage our traditional leaders to continue promoting our cultural heritage and instill these norms and values in our youth so that we can create a strong nation.

Long Live the Annual Marula Cultural Festival!

Long Live Omagongo Uuthiga Wetu/Our Heritage!

Long Live the Republic of Namibia!

I thank you.