



STATEMENT BY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR SAM NUJOMA, FOUNDING PRESIDENT
AND FATHER OF THE NAMIBIAN NATION, ON THE OCCASION
OF THE
OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE SIXTH EDITION OF THE
OSHAKATI TOTEM EXPO

SATURDAY, 27 MAY 2017

OSHAKATI INDEPENDENCE STADIUM

OSHAKATI

OSHANA REGION

**Check Against Delivery*

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Today I am deeply honoured to address you on this occasion of the official opening ceremony of the Sixth Session of the Oshakati Annual Totem Expo.

Allow me therefore to thank the host town for the wonderful preparations and thoughtful arrangements made for this year's Totem Expo.

I am equally pleased to note the theme of the totem expo entitled "*Strengthening Ties through culture*" which is the core aim of our gathering today, to strengthen our ties through culture.

Indeed, this is a befitting theme which aims to trace our people clans' identities and strengthen the ties among various Namibian cultural settings.

In this regard, it brings me joy to see us all gathered here from all corners of Namibia to proudly celebrate an event that unites us all as a nation through our diverse cultures. This shows that despite our diverse Namibian culture, we are peacefully co-existing and working together to achieve common goals as a country.

Considering our small population of about 2, 6 million people, Namibia has over 10 ethnic/cultural groups which make us a wonderful multicultural nation. This makes me proud to see how we Namibian people have preserved inherited and distinctive traditional norms, such as totems that we are celebrating during this exposition.

Mahatma Gandhi once mentioned that "*No culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive*". Therefore, I would like us all to celebrate and participate in this Totem Expo by fully embracing our cultural diversity with the spirit of unity.

Director of ceremonies;
Ladies and gentlemen:

Over the years, culture has been known since man came into existence and we are still practicing it till this today.

In many parts of the world Totemism is known to be a complex of varied ideas and ways of behavior based on a worldview drawn from nature and this is directly related to the Oshakati Totem Expo that we use as remembrance of the different totems in our country.

Our cultural values and norms, including totems, carry our African identity and that is why we should uphold this very important feature of our being.

I have noticed and hereby commend the presence of both the old and young generations present here today, which is a great thing. However, I would like to urge our older generation to take note of the fact that one of the important means of preserving our culture and heritage is to ensure that we bear to pass on what we know to the next generation.

It is becoming more and more evident that the younger generation is forgetting and ignoring the significance of embracing our culture. It is for this reason that I applaud and commend the Oshakati Town Council in its endeavor to promote, showcase and sensitize our younger generation of our diverse cultures through the Totem Expo.

Our youth face a moral and Cultural de-generation driven by lack of proper cultural guidance that would provide an understanding to know who they are, where they come from and where they are going.

Therefore guidance should be provided by us the older generation and events of this nature should be treasured and preserved because they give guidance and reference of our cultures to the younger generation.

If I am allowed to cite a few examples of what I am talking about, one of the common practices in our culture is naming our children with at least one name in our mother tongues with a specific meaning, message or remembrance of an event. However, lately naming of children is more influenced by new trends and only western names are bestowed on children.

It is equally disturbing to come across children who cannot speak their mother tongue or any vernacular language and in some cases it is the parents who rather prefer their children to speak English only. This practice must be discouraged because our mother tongue is a very important vehicle and transmission belt of our culture and our identity.

Totems have also been described as a traditional environmental conservation method besides being for kinship. Indeed, the concept of using totems demonstrated the close relationship between humans, animals and the environment to co-exist.

In this regard, it was a duty of each community member to protect and defend the totem. This obligation ranged from not harming that animal to rescuing or caring for it as needed.

Therefore, with society changing and cultures evolving, trends and new ways of doing things become evident. Nonetheless, we should still find ways on how to embrace these changes without forgetting our identities because our identities are deeply positioned in our cultural norms and values.

Similarly, in order to preserve our culture, we must encourage cultural tourism, which also immensely contributes to our economy. Traveling through African countries, tourists get to experience and see cultures that are unique. Therefore, we as the older generation must encourage our young generation not to abandon our culture nor to adopt foreign culture thereby losing the norms and values acceptable in our society, as we know, a nation without culture is like a tree without roots.

Director of Ceremonies;
Ladies and gentlemen:

As we mark the celebration of the Sixth Edition of the Oshakati Totem Expo we must look forward to renewed purpose of this expo that lies with the focal aim of ensuring that the expo gives a platform for all exhibitors from corporate to traditional exhibitors in ensuring that their businesses are successfully showcased and have made a move towards attaining their goals.

Through this Expo, the business owners have the opportunity to showcase, sell, interact and network with other counterparts which strengthens and grows local businesses.

Therefore, the Expo should not only serve as a platform to celebrate our cultures but also to boost the local economic development of the town as it continuously thrives to build confidence and attract investors.

With Oshakati town being the economic hub of the north and as we face the current economic challenges, events of this nature are desirable to contribute towards economic growth and prosperity.

Director of Ceremonies;
Ladies and gentlemen:

In conclusion, allow me to once again thank the Oshakati Town Council for having invited me to interact with you and the exhibitors as well as share some light on our culture.

I am pleased to be part of an event of this nature and I hope all exhibitors fully utilize this opportunity to the best of their abilities and wish that you enjoy this exposition.

With this few words, it is now my honour to officially declare the 6th Session of the Oshakati Annual Totem Expo officially open.

Long Live Our Culture!
Long Live Oshakati Totem Expo

I thank you.