



REMARKS BY H. E. DR. SAM NUJOMA, FOUNDING  
PRESIDENT AND FATHER OF THE NAMIBIAN NATION, ON  
THE OCCASION OF THE 80<sup>th</sup> BIRTHDAY PARTY OF  
COMRADE DR THEO-BEN GURIRAB

17<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2018

COUNTRY CLUB RESORT AND CASINO  
WINDHOEK, KHOMAS REGION

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Founder: H.E. Dr Sam Nujoma  
Board of Trustees: Hon. Nahas Angula (Chairperson), Hon. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Hon. Pendukeni Iivula-Ithana,  
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(Reg No 8208)

Directors of Ceremonies, Advocate Bience Gawanas and Dr. Andre September;  
Your Excellency Dr. Hage G. Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia and Madam Geingos, First Lady;  
Your Excellency Dr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, Former President of the Republic of Namibia and Madam Pohamba, Former First Lady;  
Your Excellency Comrade Nangolo Mbumba, Vice President of the Republic of Namibia and Madam Mbumba;  
Honourable Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Former Speaker of the National Assembly and Madam Joan Guriras;  
Right Honourable Dr Salim Salim, Former Prime Minister of the United Republic of Tanzania;  
Honourable Dr. Libertine Amadhila, Former Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia;  
Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers present;  
Honourable Members of Parliament present;  
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps;  
Distinguished Invited Guests;  
Dear Compatriots, Family and Friends;  
Members of the Media;  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am delighted and privileged to have been invited to celebrate the 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday of one of SWAPO's foremost stalwarts and living icons of Namibia's Liberation Struggle, a skilled negotiator and thus a person I am comfortable to call a seasoned diplomat as well as an eloquent speaker SWAPO has ever produced.

When Comrade Joan Guriras sent a letter of invitation requesting me to say a few words at the milestone occasion of the 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party of her husband, Comrade Dr Theo-Ben Gurirab, many fond memories came to my mind because I have lived and worked closely with him during the Liberation Struggle and after Namibia attained its freedom and genuine independence.

To be honest and frank, one cannot talk about the glorious history of SWAPO without mentioning the name Theo-Ben Gurirab unless you are trying to distort history. He had an abiding interest in and passion for the art and craft of diplomacy and international relations. That you cannot take away from him. He is a skilful writer, a negotiator and an eloquent speaker who is fond of reading books.

It was precisely against this background that SWAPO appointed him to be its Chief Representative to the United Nations and later as its Permanent Observer from 1972 to 1986 and Secretary for Foreign Affairs from 1986 to 1989.

He was and still is a trusted and tested cadre, a person I could reliably assign tasks and would achieve the desired results. For this reason, I appointed him as our first Minister of Foreign Affairs after independence and subsequently as our second Prime Minister.

In this regard, when someone whose name is synonymous with both the SWAPO Party's and the country's glorious history has turned 80 years old, I did not hesitate to accept the invitation in order to celebrate this milestone occasion for a life well spent in the service of our country and its people.

I am therefore delighted that his family has organised this event in order to afford us an opportunity to reflect on the life of this genuine freedom fighter from humble beginnings whose contribution to Namibia's liberation struggle is without comparison as far as shuttle diplomacy is concerned.

At this juncture, it is important to recall that SWAPO embarked on a three-pronged strategy comprising of mass political mobilization inside the country and that of the international community as well as the Armed Liberation Struggle.

Comrade Dr Theo-Ben Gurirab distinguished himself on the diplomatic front by fighting against the colonialists and imperialists represented by Chester Crooker and others while other freedom fighters were mobilizing our people inside the country and waging a guerrilla warfare at the battle front.

Similarly, we may well recall the recognition of SWAPO as the sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people. This came about as a result of the efforts of our team of skilled negotiators led by Comrade Dr Theo-Ben Gurirab.

It was also thanks to our team of skilled negotiators led by Comrade Dr Theo-Ben Gurirab that SWAPO's political and diplomatic status grew from that of a petitioner on the side-lines of diplomacy to one of the participants in the international arena.

In addition, it was due to his skills and those of other SWAPO leaders that we were successful in mobilising the international community through the United Nations (UN), the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the forerunner of the African Union (AU), the Frontline States and Nigeria as well as the Non-Aligned and the Anti-apartheid Movements to isolate the minority white regime of South Africa.

Through this effort, SWAPO gained friends and allies from all over the world who rendered to us political, diplomatic and material support. Most importantly, the high point of Comrade Dr Theo-Ben Gurirab's political and diplomatic career was the protracted negotiations that led to the implementation of the UN Security Council resolution 435 of 1978.

Directors of Ceremonies;

It will take me days to finish talking about the immense contribution of Comrade Gurirab to SWAPO during the bitter struggle and after Namibia's independence. Due to time constraint, I have just highlighted some of the milestones in his political and diplomatic career, including when he served as our second Speaker of the National Assembly.

We should not forget that he was also one of the key drafters of our country's Constitution and successfully led a team, as the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, that negotiated for three years for the re-integration of Walvis Bay and offshore Islands into the Republic of Namibia in 1994.

What more can I say about his illustrious career other than to say to him; Comrade you have served your country well and selflessly. Against this background, you were conferred the title of Honorary Doctor of Law by the University of Namibia as well as numerous awards from foreign countries in recognition of your outstanding leadership in the field of foreign policy and diplomacy.

The Namibian people in general and the SWAPO Party in particular are grateful to have benefited from your skills, wisdom as well as from your political and diplomatic experiences.

I am proud of you and your achievements and therefore wish the current and future generations of Namibia to emulate your good deeds.

Director of Ceremonies;

I will fail in my duties if I do not thank Dr. Gurirab's family for their contribution to the liberation struggle of Namibia and for the sacrifices they had to endure when his motherland needed his services the most.

Dr. Gurirab, I particularly want to register my vote of thanks to your life companion, Comrade Joan Guriras, who has been with you through thick and thin including when we were labelled as terrorists by the forces of imperialism.

In this regard, I am reliably informed that Comrade Joan Guriras first met Comrade Theo-Ben at the SWAPO students meeting in Harlem and at rallies organized by black conscious activists and the Civil Rights movement in the United States of America when the Black Power fever was high and all things black and African were embraced.

At that time, unfortunately, SWAPO was not popularly known unlike the ANC of South Africa which was formed in 1912. However, as history unfolded, it did not take long before the gospel of the Liberation Movement of SWAPO became known through the likes of the current President of our country, Dr. Hage Geingob, as well as Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab and Hidipo Hamutenya who formed the SWAPO's troika of Associate Representatives to the United Nations and the Americas while pursuing their studies.

As they say, the rest is history. Thus, Comrade Theo-Ben Gurirab's successes are Comrade Joan Guriras' successes because behind every strong man, there is a strong woman. Once again, thank you Comrade Joan Guriras.

In conclusion, I would like to encourage Comrade Gurirab to continue enjoying his retirement from active politics but where possible, I urge him to share his experiences and wisdom with our current leadership.

Once again, Happy Birthday Comrade Theo-Ben Gurirab! May you and your family be granted good health as well as a long and prosperous life.

I thank you.