

The Inaugural Speech of His Excellency Dr. Sam Nujoma on March 21, 1990

Honourable Master of Ceremony,
Your Excellencies,
Heads of State and Government,
Distinguished Guests,
Dear Compatriots,
Ladies and Gentlemen

For the Namibian people and for myself, this day, March 21 1990, is the most memorable and indeed the most emotional moment in the annals of our history. This solemn hour is the moment, which our people have been waiting for, for more than a century. This is the day for which tens of thousands of Namibian patriots laid down their lives, shed their precious blood, suffered imprisonment and difficult life in exile. Today, our hearts are filled with great joy and jubilation because our deepest and longest yearning has been realized. Honourable Master of Ceremony, Sir, for the past 43 years or so, this land of our forbearers was a bone of contention between the Namibian people and the international community, on one hand, and South Africa, on the other. The Namibian problem was at the centre of a bitter international dispute over the past four decades.

The United Nations and other international bodies produced huge volumes of resolutions, in an attempt to resolve this intractable problem. However, it pleases me to state that we are gathered here today, not to pass yet another resolution, but to celebrate the dawn of a new era in this land and to proclaim to the world that a new star has risen on the African continent. Africa's last colony is, from this hour liberated.

It is, therefore, profoundly momentous and highly joyous, for the Namibian people and myself, that the highest representatives of the international community - The Secretary General of the United Nations - together with the State President of South Africa, and the Namibian nation, which I am honoured to lead, are able to announce, here today, to the world that a definitive and final solution to the protracted Namibian problem has, indeed, been unanimously reached by these three parties.

For the Namibia people, the realization of our most cherished goal, namely the independence of our country and the freedom of our people, is fitting tribute to the heroism and tenacity with which our people fought for this long-awaited day. We have been sustained in our difficult struggle by the powerful force of conviction in the righteousness and justness of our cause. Today history has absolved us, our vision of a democratic state of Namibia has been translated into a reality.

With regard to the international community, the achievement of Namibia's Independence today is, we believe, a welcome and laudable culmination of many years of consistent support for our cause. The world's demand for our country to be allowed to exercise its' inalienable right to self-determination and independence has been achieved. WE express our most sincere gratitude to the international community for its' steadfast support.

As for the government of South Africa, it can be said that the decision to accept the implementation of Resolution 435 was the first demonstration of political will to find a negotiated solution to the problems of our region. Furthermore, President Willem de Klerk proclamation here today that South Africa has reached a final and irreversible decision to relinquish control over Namibia is an act of statesmanship and realism. This, we hope, will continue to unfold in South Africa itself.

Honourable Master of Ceremony, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Compatriots, Ladies and Gentlemen, I seize the opportunity to point out that the protracted process of negotiating and agreement on Resolution 435 and struggling for its' implementation was difficult and, at times, acrimonious. It was only perseverance, forbearance and commitment, which helped us to see the process through to its' logical conclusion, namely, the birth of the Namibian nation we are here to witness.

Against this background, it is heartening for the Namibian people and I, to know that our independence has been achieved under conditions of national consensus and international unanimity. The impressive presence here today of so many world leaders and other dignitaries is a clear testimony to the fact that Namibia's achievement of independence is an event of great world importance. For us this is yet another reason for celebration.

With respect to the important question of national consensus, I am glad to announce that following the independence election last November, the various Namibia political parties worked together in the Constituent Assembly, where we formulated and adopted a Constitution acceptable to the broad majority of our people.

Against this background, Honourable Master of Ceremony, Distinguished Guests and Dear Compatriots I am indebted to the Namibian electorate for giving SWAPO (the South West Africa People's Organization) an absolute majority, thereby enabling it to form the first government of the Republic of Namibia. In the same vein, I am grateful to members of Namibia's Constitutional Assembly for the confidence they placed in me in electing me as the first President of the Republic of Namibia. I pledge to do my utmost to uphold the Constitution of the Republic, and to honour the trust, which the Namibian people have bestowed upon me to lead this new nation at this critical juncture.

To the Namibian people, I would like to state, on this solemn occasion, that our nation blazed the trail to freedom. It has arisen to its' feet. As from today, we are masters of this vast land of our ancestors. The destiny of this country is now fully in our own hands. We should, therefore, look forward to the future with confidence and hope.

Taking the destiny of this country in our own hands means, among other things, making the great effort to forge national identity and unity. Our collective security and prosperity depends on our unity of purpose and action, Unity is a precondition for peace and development. Without peace, it is not possible for the best and talented citizens of our country to realise their potential.

Our achievement of Independence imposes upon us a heavy responsibility, not only to defend our hard-won liberty, but also to set ourselves higher standards of equality, justice and opportunity for all, without regard to race, creed or colour. These are the standards from which all who seek to emulate us shall draw inspiration.

Master of Ceremony, Sir, In accepting the sacred responsibility which the Namibian people have placed on me, as the first President of the Republic of Namibia, I would like to bow and pay homage to our fallen heroes and heroines, whose names Namibia's present and future generations will sing in songs of praise and whose martyrdom they will intone. In conclusion, I move, in the name of our people, to declare that Namibia is forever free, sovereign and independent.