

ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. SAM NUJOMA, FOUNDING PRESIDENT AND
FATHER OF THE NAMIBIAN NATION, ON THE OCCASION OF OTAVI INVESTMENT
EXPO AND CULTURAL FESTIVAL GALA DINNER

SATURDAY, 13 APRIL 2013

PAREISIS SPORT FIELD

OTJIWARONGO

OTJOZONDJUPA REGION

Director of Ceremonies;
Honourable Cabinet Ministers present;
Honourable Members of Parliament present;
Honourable Samuel Nuuyoma, Governor of the Otjozondjupa Region and
Other Governors present;
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
Honourable Regional Councillors;
Your Worship the Mayor of Otjiwarongo;
Your Worship the Mayor of Otavi;
Distinguished Senior Government officials and Captains of Industry;
Distinguished Business Personalities present;
Distinguished Invited Guests;
Members of the Media;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It gives me great pleasure to be present here this evening to witness the official countdown of the first ever Otavi Investment Expo and Cultural Festival.

When the Otavi Town Council approached me to serve as the Patron of this noble idea, I had no hesitation to accept the honour since it is long overdue to revive and diversify the economic activity of the Town of Otavi.

Indeed, I agreed to the request since I am also farming in that area and want to see the town of Otavi being revived to its former glory and become the bread basket of the country as it is strategically located in the famous maize triangle well known for its abundance of rain and minerals including the recently inaugurated cement factory.

Otavi also serves as a gateway to the northern and northeastern parts of the country, connecting Namibia to neighbouring landlocked countries through the Trans Caprivi highway.

The Otavi Investment Expo and Cultural Festival represents one of the many initiatives by the Otavi town Council in spearheading the development of the town and promote trade and investment facilitation in order to address the many socio-economic challenges facing our country.

It would therefore be remiss of me if I did not express my gratitude to the host town and His Worship the Mayor of Otjiwarongo for the wonderful preparations and thoughtful arrangements made for this Gala Dinner.

Director of Ceremonies;

As we are all aware, a trade fair is an exhibition organised so that companies operating in a specific industry can showcase their latest products and services as well as study the activities of rival businesses, examine market trends and identify business opportunities.

In the same vein, trade fairs create a networking platform for businesses as they often bring suppliers and retailers together. Trade fairs also provide those participating with the opportunity to benchmark the quality and cost of their services and products against those of their competitors.

For this reason, the significance of the one-on-one contact between a business and potential client which a trade fair offer cannot be overemphasized.

In this regard, I trust that businesses operating in and around Otavi and Otjiwarongo, as the capital of the Otjozondjupa Region, will make their presence felt and take advantage of the opportunities that this event will offer in line with the Otavi Expo theme “Creating Opportunities.”

Director of Ceremonies;

Production is the basis for wealth creation and economic growth. In turn, wealth creation and economic growth are the bases for employment creation and poverty eradication.

For the purpose of improving the welfare of our people, it is therefore imperative that as a nation we must promote productivity and competitiveness as critical elements in wealth creation and economic growth.

The critical challenge facing our country, however, is how to overcome constraints to wealth creation and economic growth. This means that we should address such constraints head on. Some critical constraints to productivity and growth are, among others, knowledge and skills deficit and lack of capacity for marketing and market development.

Indeed, knowledge and skills are keys to productivity and competitiveness. Our primary resource is therefore our people. Knowledgeable citizens are able to invent new products and skilled workers are competent to produce quality products.

It is for this reason that we have prioritized education and training as the key to economic growth, social development, employment creation, productivity and competitiveness.

Another area of great concern is our inability to diversify and create new markets for our products. For example, we have huge untapped markets in Asia and Latin America. Why can we not make Namibia the world centre for meat supply to these parts of the world?

We do have a great potential in this regard. We have raw materials, excellent communication and transport infra-structure and our country is well positioned in the centre of the world.

Ships from North and South America to Asia and from Asia to North Europe can make Walvis Bay the port of call. Similarly, ships from Europe to Asia and vice versa can call on Luderitz or Walvis Bay.

In this regard, the question we should ask ourselves is not whether we have the capacity to do it, but whether we are willing to go an extra mile.

I strongly believe that the right approach and the way forward is to enhance inter-trade among the African countries and beyond.

It is imperative that we embark upon adding value to our natural resources in order to create wealth, enhance economic growth and improve the competitiveness of our economies.

I therefore urge the business community present here to use the opportunity thus created to foster inter-trade and find new markets to diversify their target customers' base. Otavi should take up this challenge and play a leading role in this endeavor.

I am happy to learn that the Otavi Investment Expo made provision for Small and Medium-size Enterprises (SMEs) to exploit opportunities in line with the Government's special emphasis on the development of small businesses as drivers of economic growth, and as a means to alleviating poverty and unemployment.

I believe that the Otavi Investment Expo is indeed the ideal space needed for Small and Medium-size Enterprises (SMEs) to market and demonstrate their products or services to the people of the Otjozondjupa region and beyond.

As a result, the value of this five-day expo will be near impossible to quantify as it not only aims to strengthen the established economic activities of Otavi but also to enhance business opportunities for local entrepreneurs.

In conclusion, the hosting of an event of this magnitude is a very expensive undertaking which requires substantial capital lay out. The purpose of tonight's gala dinner is therefore to raise sufficient funds to ensure the successful hosting of the Otavi Investment Expo and Cultural Festival.

Hence, I appeal to the participants to open their hearts and contribute towards this noble and worthwhile initiative. The justness of their cause, their enduring perseverance and their organizational ability will make the expo to become a huge success which, I am told, will become an annual calendar event of the Town of Otavi.

I trust that you will enjoy the Otavi Investment Expo and Cultural Festival.

I thank you and bon appetite!