

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY HIS WORSHIP CLLR MUESEE KAZAPUA, MAYOR OF THE CITY OF WINDHOEK, AT THE OCCASION OF THE 10TH NATIONAL YOUTH DAY AND WEEK**

**DATE: 27 APRIL 2017**

**TIME: 10H00**

**VENUE: UN PLAZA, WINDHOEK**

**Director of the Programme,**

**Honourable Laura McLeod-Katjirua, Governor of Khomas Region;**

**Regional and Local Authorities’ Councillors present here today;**

**Mr. Mandela Kapere, Executive Chairperson of the National Youth Council of Namibia;**

**Board Members of the National Youth Council of Namibia;**

**Mrs. Calista Schwartz-Gowases, Director of the National Youth Council of Namibian**

**Youth representatives from Botswana, Bulgaria, Hungary, Kenya and South Africa**

**Development partners present here today**

**The Namibian Youth and youth organisations present here today,**

**Distinguished Guests,**

**Members of the Media,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

I am delighted to be here today as we commemorate the 2017 Annual Youth Day and Week. Today is an opportunity to celebrate together the enthusiasm, the creativity and the energy of youth.

On the onset, **Program Director,** I am inclined to mention that young people are an untapped reservoir of talent who should be given an opportunity to express their opinions and unlock their potentials. Similarly, young are not only the leaders of tomorrow, but also the partners of today. They are social actors of change and progress. They are a crucial segment of a nation’s development and their contribution, therefore, is highly needed.

It is for this reason that the Government of the Republic of Namibia adopted laws and established institutions that are mandated to deal with issues of youth development, empowerment and absorption into the mainstream of socio-economic development.

The National Youth Day and Week in Namibia are provided for by section 43 of the National Youth Council Act, Act No. 03 of 2009, with a purpose of recognising efforts of the Namibian youth, in enhancing our society; and to promote ways to engage young people in becoming more actively involved in making positive contributions to our communities.

The institutional framework set in place include the National Youth Council of Namibia and the Ministry responsible for youth affairs, who together with other equally important stakeholders, have been coordinating these two important occasions since 2007, which events mark their 10th Anniversary today.

**Program Director, Ladies and Gentlemen**

I am happy to note that this year, the organisers of the National Youth Day and Week have chosen to celebrate the events under a befitting theme **“*Eradicating Poverty and Achieving Sustainable Development through Literacy and Promotion of Arts among the Youth*”.** The theme does not only embrace the ideals of United Nations SDGs adopted in September 2015 as part of its agenda 2030, but also our national aspirations enshrined in the Harambee Prosperity Plan.

As we move forward to implement the new global vision for sustainable development, the engagement of youth is more valuable than ever. This is because today´s generation of youth is the largest in history. By involving young people centrally in projects of **“shared prosperity”** which is at the core of the sustainable development agenda, they can continue to support multilateral approaches led by our Government.

We will probably all agree on the fact that the Sustainable Development Occupy the highest levels of concern in the current days, triggered by the need to end hunger, poverty and illiteracy, and respecting the only planet we have. As a young person, myself, I do believe that today’s decisions and actions won’t only affect my future and my generation, but, it will have the strength to radically change it to the best or the worst. Along that line, allow me now to connect the Namibian youth and youth development to the theme as part of my keynote statement.

**Director of Ceremonies, Hon Governor, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Youth in Namibia are recognised as those young people between the ages of 16 to 35 years. These, we believe, are the people that we will lead us tomorrow. It is however important to highlight that the abilities of our young people to lead us tomorrow is dependent on how we develop them today.

***Poverty:*** Globally, economical exclusion and youth unemployment are the main challenges. Two out of three young people in developing economies are without work, or engaged in irregular/informal employment. In our contribution to poverty eradication we must work hard to ensure that young people´s entry in the labour market, build their capacities and connect them with better working opportunities. Equally, we should create opportunities that enable the young people to access basic amenities, such as housing. It is for this reason that the City of Windhoek, late last year took a deliberate decision to allocate a 100 plots, in Khomasdal Extension 16 to the young people aged between 16 and 35.

***Literacy,***which is an aspect of education, is key to human development as it opens up opportunities and improves life chances that allow individuals to lead independent lives. In the past, literacy was mainly focusing on people’s ability to read, write and use arithmetic. However, as we progressed into a modern world, where we have a lot to deal with, we can no longer limit literacy to such.  In the information age in which we find ourselves, we need people who are literate in languages, numbers, images, computers, social media and other basic means to understand, communicate and gain useful knowledge as part of our daily lives.  High level of literacy provide a good foundation for further developing the knowledge and skills base of young people and help them to improve their lives in terms of access to higher education and job opportunities.

It is important to note that the foundation of an entire nation, its economy and consequently its future, depends on how well the youth is educated. The youth of a nation shapes and moulds its present and paves the way for its future. In much of the world, high youth literacy rates suggest that illiteracy will become less and less common as younger generations with higher educational attainment levels replace older ones.

However, in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia, where the vast majority of the world's illiterate youth live, lower school enrolments implies that illiteracy will persist to a greater degree. Compared to our neighbouring countries; that is South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Angola and Swaziland), Namibia has the third highest youth literacy rate among 15-24 year old, which stood at 86.9% coming after South Africa with 98.9%; Botswana with 96.1%; and Swaziland with 93.5%.

According to the 2016 Commonwealth Youth Development Index, there are still vast numbers of young people who lack basic literacy skills, and opportunities are restricted for a range of groups such as girls and young women, rural youth and young people with disabilities. Although this does not specifically refer to Namibia, we need to analyse our own situations, to ensure our rural youth, girls, young women, youth with disabilities and those from marginalised communities are not left behind on this very important human development indicator.

I am told that as part of this year National Youth Day and Week celebrations, a number of workshops including media, leadership and financial awareness trainings are taking place. I would like to comment the NYC for this very important consideration.  Such efforts are in line with the modern definition of literacy and can only go a long way in helping us attaining the SDG goal 4, particularly target 4.6, which seeks to ensure that by 2030 all youth and adults reach a proficiency level of literacy and numeracy, sufficient to participate in society fully.

**Director of the Programme, Hon Governor, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

***Arts***, on the other hand, is another key component in human development because it is through arts that people communicate their innovative ideas on how they interpret issues and come up with creative solutions. Through arts, we can bring about political change, comment on any aspect of society, and convey a specific emotion or mood.

I am informed that the National Youth Council of Namibia has partnered with the Erasmus Programme of the European Union under the banner of the Skills for Managing Arts Project, to promote collaborative development, dissemination and wide utilization of innovative Open Educational Resources.  This Project does not only provide training methods in arts and creative sector management and entrepreneurship, but also build youth workers’ and youth organizations’ capacity to foster youth inclusion, youth employment, and youth-led community and social impact driven initiatives, in the art industry. I am sure with the interaction between the partner countries in this Project (i.e. Botswana, Bulgaria, Hungary, Kenya and South Africa), our local art industry got another opportunity to tap from their expertise.

**Director of Ceremonies; ladies and gentlemen,**

High level of literacy and promotion of arts among the youth have a potential of assisting us in eradicating poverty, as it improves the way we communicate and opens up more opportunities among the youth.

I would therefore like to use this opportunity to call upon all of us who are in charge of youth development to ensure literacy of any good kind is included as a key aspect in the development of our young people, if we are to expect them to successfully lead our nation into a prosperous future.

With regard to arts, I am convinced that we have a sizable number of artists, which number I believe is also growing. But I think, as a nation and stakeholders from different walks of life, we need to invest more in the art industry, so that it reaches the highest level it can.

We need more capital injection to assist the aspiring, upcoming and veteran artists to grow the industry in terms of capacity building, so that they are able to market their talents to the rest of the world, in order contribute to wealth and employment creation, and to the general economic growth of our motherland.

While people of all ages share in the goal of creating a sustainable and healthy planet, it is the youngest members of the global population who may have the most to win or lose in whether we achieve targets for sustainable living. Our task is to build on the foundation laid by our forefathers and fix mistakes that have been made by the past generations, in order to ensure a future to our children.

As we celebrate this this Day, **Ladies and Gentlemen**, I call for forging new partnerships and joining efforts in eliminating all the barriers young people face, in making them less vulnerable to any sort of exclusion, so that we can all see a prosperous Namibia through their eyes. Young people are not only our future -- they are our present. Our planet has never been so young, with 1.8 billion young women and men. They are the most connected, the most outspoken and the most open-minded.

As a Council, we place high premium on youth development. I is for this reason that on our administrative structure we have a Department dealing with the youth.

We have further established a Junior Council, as a platform for instilling civic responsibility and sharpening young people leadership skills. We are therefore happy to be associated with the commemoration of this year Youth Day and Week.

With these remarks, I now declare the 10th Annual Youth Day and Week officially open.

**Thank you!**