

**REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY  
HIS EXCELLENCY DR HAGE G. GEINGOB,  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA,  
AT THE INAUGURATION OF DEBMARINE MINING  
VESSEL – BENGUELA GEM**

**MARCH 18, 2022**

**WALVIS BAY**

**ERONGO REGION**

*Check against delivery*

**Director of proceedings;**

**Hon. Tom Alweendo, Minister of Mines and Energy;**

**Hon. Ministers present;**

**Members of the Diplomatic Corps;**

**Hon. Neville Andre Itope, Governor of the Erongo Region;**

**Your Worship Trevino Forbes, Mayor of Walvisbay;**

**Hon. Councilors;**

**Mr. Bruce Cleaver, CEO of De Beers Group;**

**Mr. Otto Shikongo – CEO of Debmarine Namibia and all the Debmarine employees;**

**Members of the Media;**

**Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,**

**I am delighted to be joining you this morning at this prestigious event of the inauguration of the seventh Debmarine Namibia vessel.**

**This coming Monday, we will be celebrating 32 years of independence. At 32 years of age,**

**Namibia has a wonderful story to tell. It is a story of peace, unity and development. It is a story of perseverance and hard work. It is a story in which the mining sector has played an instrumental role. The mining sector remains one of the major contributors to GDP, and according to our National Planning Commission (NPC) has been contributing an average of 10% of GDP since 1990. In fact, since 2012, the mining sector contribution increased with the addition of new mines that started operating, resulting in a contribution to GDP of 14% in 2018. The highest ever.**

**Although the past several years have been characterized by fluctuations in commodity prices due to economic downturns, severe periods of drought and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, with investments such as what we are witnessing today, I have full confidence that the future of Namibia's mining sector remains bright and we**

**can expect it to continue contributing to our developmental aspirations as a nation.**

**This vessel will be deployed to recover diamonds from the seabed safely, with due regard to our fragile marine environment. I am very pleased to be informed by the officials that, due regard for the environment is indeed the main consideration for the type of vessel procured for the sea mining operations of Debmarine Namibia. As you are aware, in our Harambee Prosperity Plan II, we have undertaken to develop complementary engines of growth. As a country, we aim to maintain our competitive edge as an investment location for mining-related activities and leverage this position and expertise through attractive investment policy frameworks, to accelerate investments in non-traditional economic sectors. In this regard, Namibia is also well positioned to design and champion a sustainable “blue economy”.**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

**The raw minerals that Namibia is blessed with, belong to the people of Namibia. However, in a highly capital intensive and technologically advanced industry, few Namibians possess the means to exploit these minerals. This is why we court investors. However, I wish to emphasize that as a government – our contract with the people of Namibia is that we will always use our best endeavors to ensure that we deliver the best value for our people, from every investment in our mineral resources. As part of the Second Struggle for Economic Emancipation of all Namibians, it is the expressed wish of the Namibian Government that raw materials extracted from the Namibian soil and sea should also directly benefit, through economic shareholding, the communities in the areas from which the resources are derived.**

**Namibia is one of the most economically unequal societies in the world, and the Government's goal has continuously been to eliminate inequality through wealth creation and distribution. Yes, we welcome employment creation, taxes and royalties which are prudently employed by Government for the national development of the country. But over and above those welcome benefits, we want to see community based economic empowerment through shareholding and more corporate social responsibility programs, particularly in the exploitation of national resources. These efforts will not only alleviate national and community-based poverty but also contribute to the building of a more egalitarian, stable, inclusive and prosperous Namibia.**

**To this end, the widely discussed National Equitable Economic Empowerment Bill (NEEEB) is in progress and I look forward to its enactment**

**soonest, and trust that our private sector stakeholders will embrace this initiative.**

**Our partnership with De Beers dates back to 1994. I remember the days of those difficult negotiations, when we deliberated on the formation of Namdeb – a 50/50 equal joint venture. Today, our partnership has evolved and grown to include sorting and valuation via the *Namibia Diamond Trading Company* as well as *Debmarine Namibia* which is now the leading producer of Namibian diamonds.**

**As you are aware, Namibia has become the focal point of global attention over the past several months. The discovery of hydrocarbons suggesting that we may have commercial quantities of oil has attracted much attention to Namibia. The work we are doing with Green Hydrogen has put Namibia firmly on the map as a desired destination for international investors.**

**While these ventures will unlock tremendous economic opportunities for Namibia, they will not happen overnight. We need current and on-going projects, like this new vessel to help us through the transition until we bring these new ventures to reality. And of-course to continue to make contributions beyond the arrival of the new ventures.**

**It is not easy to convert these promised ventures into reality. Investors need the people of Namibia to be partners on this journey by:**

- 1. Supporting the work**
- 2. Availing ourselves for the job opportunities**
- 3. And being ambassadors promoting the good name of Namibia all over the world**

**In my time as both Prime Minister and now as President of Namibia, I have sadly witnessed a few projects that have been compromised by often unfounded negative publicity. As a**



**government we will never advocate for reckless disregard of due process, including environmental due diligence and compliance with international best practice. All we need, is that the science and empirical facts lead the evidence, not armchair critiques.**

**My biggest drive, since becoming President, has been and will remain the attraction and expansion of domestic and foreign direct investment in a win-win manner, for the benefit of our citizens. This is what will lift our people from the shackles of poverty and inequality. My objective is to create an enabling environment in which the standard of living of the lower two-thirds of our population will be raised to acceptable levels, thereby improving their human dignity.**

**Since gaining independence on March 1990, our mantra has always been that government cannot do it alone. Thus, partnership with the private**

**sector is essential, if we are to reach our full potential as a country. Guaranteeing the safety, peace and tranquility of our nation cannot be left to government alone. We need the private sector to absorb young Namibians into training programmes and to create job opportunities. This is what people yearn for more than anything else. When you provide job opportunities to people, you create a sense of pride and purpose for them. And when people have pride and purpose, they will contribute to the well-being of their families, extended families, their communities and the country at large.**

**Let us therefore hold hands, as citizens, as Government as the business community. Together we can reignite our economy, together we can break the shackles of poverty, and together we can build a better country, and deliver the promise of prosperity to the Namibian House.**

**Congratulations to everyone involved with this project. I wish the men and women who will work on this vessel the very best.**

**I thank you**