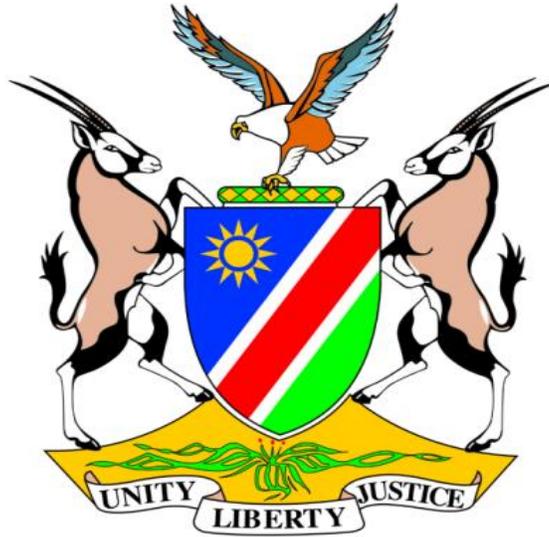


REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. HAGE GEINGOB,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE MEMORIAL SERVICE OF LATE COMANDANTE EN
JEFE FIDEL ALEJANDRO CASTRO RUZ
LEADER OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION**

DECEMBER 6, 2016

PARLIAMENT GARDEN

Check against Delivery

Directors of Ceremonies, Cde. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah – Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, and Cde. Helmuth Angula, SWAPO Party Secretary for Mobilization;

Cde. Nickey Iyambo – Vice President of the Republic of Namibia;

The Right Honourable Cde. Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila – Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia;

Cde. Dr. Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma – Founding Father of the Republic of Namibia and Father of the Namibian Revolution;

Cde. Prof. Peter Katjavivi – Speaker of the National Assembly;

Cde. Margareth Mensah-Williams – Chairperson of the National Council;

Your Lordship Judge Peter Shivute – Chief Justice;

Cde Nangolo Mbumba – Secretary General of the SWAPO Party;

Cde Andimba Toivo Ya Toivo – Chairperson of the Namibia-Cuba Friendship Association;

Hon. McHenry Venaani – Leader of the Official Opposition Party;

Comrades Cabinet Ministers, Deputy Ministers and Members of Parliament;

Cde. Giraldo Mazola – Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba to Namibia;

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Distinguished Service Chiefs;

Veterans of the Liberation Struggle;

Comrades and friends;

What is the price of freedom? What is the cost of liberating a nation? How much do you pay a country, which fought for you when others were allies to your enemy?

This is how I started my historic speech at Havana to over 1.5 million people, representing the many cultures of the people of the world.

Yes, to the Cuban people, we owe a lifetime of gratitude. Namibia's victory in the struggle for independence against apartheid South Africa is a result of the solidarity of the International Community including the Republic of Cuba. But the solidarity forged in the trenches of the battlefields of Southern Angola by Cuban Internationalist is a solidarity for which Namibia shall always be indebted.

For theirs was a great sacrifice - A sacrifice in blood. Therefore, we will shall and must never stop thanking them. Like a well-bred or brought-up child will never stop thanking his or her parents, we shall never stop thanking the Cuban people.

There is no other man who exemplifies the spirit of sacrifice than the late Comandante En Jefe Fidel Castro Ruz.

Fidel lived his life in service of the oppressed and for the self-determination of the Americas and Africa. He taught us that, one can compromise on anything, except on one's principles. His name will be entered in the annals of history as one of the greatest leaders of our epoch.

The outpouring of grief that has reverberated across Latin America, Africa, Asia and other places around the world since his passing on November 25, 2016, attest to this reality.

Fidel's principled stance and decision to share his life with the world's poor and oppressed people motivated him to make a difficult decision by practically risking the future of the Cuban Revolution by answering the request of the MPLA and sending thousands of Cuban troops to Angola to assist in the fight against Apartheid South Africa's pending invasion of Luanda.

It was not a decision made for economic gain, but only to gain in conscience. Today we gather to honour the life of this great leader.

Today we stand here, as free and independent citizens because of this great leader. We are praising today, with our memories and with our prayers, a man whose outstanding human qualities changed the course of history for millions of oppressed people around the world. Fidel Castro did not merely live and pass on. He lived and left a long-lasting impression on humanity.

The brave sacrifices made by the people of Cuba, putting at risk their own national security, provided the impetus for the intensification of the armed liberation struggle by the military wing of SWAPO known as the Peoples' Liberation Army of Namibia. Cuba provided support to the African people's struggle for their freedom and independence for no material gain.

As Fidel himself said, the only thing they brought home were the corpses of their fallen comrades. It was in our defence in which Cuban soldiers lost their lives and limbs. When invading Apartheid South African troops attacked the Namibian refugee camp at Cassinga - Angola, Cuban forces immediately came to the rescue of the defenceless men, women and children. After the attack, Cuba was the first country to provide education facilities at the Island of Youth in Cuba for the 3000 surviving children of the Cassinga massacre.

The high stakes battle of Cuito Cuanavale is yet another example of Fidel's unflinching belief in the liberation of the oppressed. Under his command, Cuba risked its own national security in order to repel apartheid South Africa.

Defeat at Cuito Cuanavale would have been defeat for all the oppressed people of Southern Africa and victory to racist South Africa and the imperialism they represented.

Fidel described how “thousands of courageous and tireless combatants from Namibia” joined Angolan and Cuban troops in this battle of ideology.

Cuito Cuanavele was a watershed moment for Southern Africa in general but particularly for Namibia as it led to the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 435. This culminated in Namibian Independence in 1990. The blood of Cuban fighters indeed waters our freedom.

We have forgiven our enemies for what they have done to us, but we will never forget our friends who stood by us during difficult times. Therefore, Cuban people are our friends. Fidel is our friend. Now and forever. Even in death, he will remain our Hero.

The unwavering commitment of Fidel to our freedom led to the destruction of apartheid in Namibia.

After Namibian independence, Fidel ordered that Namibia continue to benefit from Cuban doctors and other professionals for which he declined any monetary compensation from Namibia to Cuba. Today, these Cuban professionals continue to carry out their duties in Namibia with distinction. As the Cuban Ambassador to Namibia so rightfully said in his editorial in today's *Namibian* newspaper, “*They are not here as tourists. They are here to support a sisterly country.*” Cde Ambassador, thank you for your brilliant peace in today's *Namibian* newspaper.

We have a lot to learn from a man who lived, and died, on his own terms - A man of staunch principles and a revolutionary - A man who brought the real meaning of human rights to millions of forgotten people across Latin America, Africa and South Asia.

At this juncture, we express our thanks to US President Barack Obama and his administration, for taking the bold and noble step in initiating the United States – Cuban Thaw, which opened the door for the restoration of full diplomatic relations between the Republic of Cuba and the United States of America after 54 years of hostility between the two nations.

President Obama realized that if a certain course of action does not yield any positive results after more than 50 years, it calls for a change in approach.

We hope that the President-Elect of the United States of America, Donald Trump, will build on the work of his predecessor and finally lift *El Bloqueo*.

This will enable the people of the Republic of Cuba and the United States of America to live side by side in peace and harmony, sharing mutual respect, as we do in the Namibian House.

Democracy and human rights are fruitless in the absence of economic equity. In Namibia, we understand this and it is the same in the Republic of Cuba.

It is for this reason that we have declared war on poverty, corruption and inequality. As Joseph Stiglitz once said, "*Of all the costs imposed on our society by the top 1 percent, perhaps the greatest is this: the erosion of our sense of identity in which fair play, equality of opportunity, and a sense of community are so important.*"

Fidel's commitment and determination to support the fight for African liberation was a heritage bequeathed to the Cuban people by Jose Marti, hero of the Cuban Revolution, who said, "A true man does not seek the path where advantage lies, but rather, the path where duty lies."

The legacy of Fidel is an eternally burning flame that will continue to inspire and ignite the passion of progressive forces of the world as we fight for economic justice and the realization of an equitable world order.

Though Namibia and the rest of the world has lost a revolutionary icon, the Castro family has lost a father, a brother, an uncle and a friend.

The people and Government of the Republic of Namibia pass on most sincere condolences to the Castro family for their devastating loss.

May the revolutionary spirit of Comandante En Jefe Fidel Castro consume all of us so we may continue to resist neo colonialism and remain united in solidarity against all forms of exploitation. Hasta la victoria siempre!