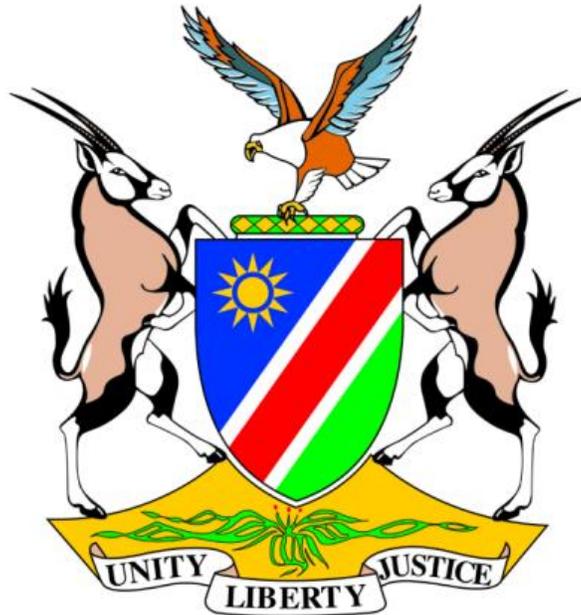


REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY
HONOURABLE FRANS KAPOFI, MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS AND
IMMIGRATION,**

AT THE

**2019 ANNUAL STAFF MEETING OF THE MINISTRY OF HOME
AFFAIRS AND IMMIGRATION**

CONTINENTAL, MHA&I, WINDHOEK

13 MARCH 2019

Checked against delivery

Honourable Maureen Hinda-Mbuende, Deputy Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration;

Mr. Etienne Maritz, Executive Director;

Management Members of the Ministry;

Officials of the Ministry;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good morning to you all.

I am pleased to address you this morning during the 2019 Annual Staff Meeting of the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration. As I am meeting some of you for the first time this year, allow me to wish you and your families a happy and prosperous 2019. I trust that you all used the holiday season to rejuvenate and reflect on your personal successes, encounters and the year ahead.

Secondly, allow me to introduce to you, Mr. Etienne Maritz who was recently appointed by the Right the Honourable Prime Minister as the Executive Director of the Ministry Home Affairs and Immigration. Etienne served the Government in various capacities: as Deputy Permanent Secretary, Department of Public Service Management, OPM, you all know what the role of that department entails. His last assignment was as Executive Director in the President's Private Office, an assignment that made him to interact on a daily basis with His Excellency the President.

In this regard, we are fortunate to have been given a person of Etienne's calibre. We welcome you; and count on you as we continuously strive to take the Ministry to greater heights.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

February 2019 marked the first year of my assignment to the Ministry, as well as that of the Honourable Deputy Minister. During the past financial year, we received first-hand

information and details on the intricacies of the Ministry. We did ask questions on various aspects related to the operations of the Ministry. Many of our questions were answered to our satisfaction. Against this background, this customary gathering enables us to take stock of our common successes, best practises, envisaged projects, and bottlenecks of which we have to identify timely solutions and interventions.

The mandate of the Ministry is to **“manage and administer the National population Register, facilitate lawful migration and to receive and protect refugees and asylum seekers”**. It is therefore incumbent upon us to determine whether we are implementing the thematic areas encompassed by the statement. Or, are we merely performing our duties and functions without knowing the importance of this mandate?. For these reasons, I wish to highlight some of the issues we have to pay attention to, to build on our achievements:

A. Turnaround Strategy

As you are well aware, the implementation of the Turnaround Strategy resulted in a reduction of turnaround times, more effective systems, shorter queues, efficient offices, improved customer service, elimination of backlogs and daily dispatching of applications and printed documents. Additionally, electronic reporting on daily production has been implemented and customer excellence improved significantly.

The realisations of the Turnaround Strategy enabled the Ministry to rollout e-Birth and e-Death notification services, the Electronic Border Control Management System (e-BCMS) and the introduction of the Electronic Passports (e-passports). Since my arrival to the Ministry, I have been hearing about something called Electronic Visa-Stickers. Every time I ask about this exciting new process, I am informed that “we are at an advanced stage to start issuing Electronic Visa-Stickers”. Electronic Visa-Stickers are the in-thing worldwide, and Namibia cannot afford to remain behind in this respect.

Similarly, I keep on querying why we are still using the otherwise, out-dated arrival and departure forms at points of entry. It was explained that many stakeholders would want to access this paper trail to tally the number of visitors to Namibia. This information can be retrieved in no time from our Electronic Border Control Management System. These two processes, that being the Electronic Visa-Stickers and the phasing-out of arrival and departure forms, can be implemented concurrently to improve process and turnaround time.

I therefore entreat our Executive Director, to ensure that I receive a thorough implementation plan by end of March 2019 regarding these two processes. Further to that, I expect these processes to be introduced by latest 31 May 2019.

B: Statelessness Prevailing in Namibia

Honourable Deputy Minister,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Ministry is still experiencing difficulties with granting Namibian citizenship to individuals who arrived in Namibia from other countries, especially between 1st of January 1978 and the 20th of March 1990, and have resided in Namibia since then. We have received numerous applications from people falling under this category but are unable to assist them because of gaps in the citizenship laws. This category of people could be stateless. I wish to make it public, that the Government takes the issue of statelessness, and potential statelessness, seriously and is in the process of finding a solution.

C: Conduct of Officials of the Ministry

The Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration provides services both to the Namibian citizenry, and to a sizable number of international visitors who come to our country for

leisure, business exploration, to receive medical treatment, or for employment purposes.

Also, there are a number of these people who wish to make Namibia their permanent, but lawful home. However, due to the lengthy, legal and administrative processes we use; a number of applications go unanswered or responded to very late. Too often we receive complaints that applicants' files cannot be found or traced, and that files are missing etc. In many of these instances, our Ministry is dragged to Court.

We have also noticed or observed that because of these frustrations, applicants are resorting to buying their way into Namibia. This is an illegal way of obtaining status in Namibia and would not be condoned. Everyone aspiring to become a Namibian citizen or resident must just follow the requirements and procedures as outlined in the applicable laws.

D: Outstanding Administrative Matters and lack of Intervention from Management Members

During my familiarisation visit to the various regional and sub-regional offices, border posts, I was able to directly interact with our staff and those from other stakeholder O/M/As such as Customs, NAMPOL, and Veterinary Services. I was very much impressed with the frank yet constructive deliberations and exchanges I had with those colleagues.

However, what those of you here at Head Quarters may not be aware of is; that these colleagues operate under harsh conditions, some without safe drinking water, no stationary or operational printing facilities, in dilapidated buildings and quarters, and where hygiene officers work without appropriate protective clothing and yet, they are expected to clean and maintain premises without the necessary detergents and implements. The reality though, is that certain Managers as well as Officials based at

Head Office, 'turn a deaf ear or blind eye' to the plight of our fellow colleagues and subordinates.

These official timely report stationary and procurement needs; they register urgent maintenance needs; Immigration Officers call the Visa and Permit Department for verification of the status of persons who were supposedly granted these; report IT and other related problems; phones of managers and other support staff at Head Office go unanswered and requests are left unattended for months without any explanation; and sometimes using budget allocations or lack of money as an excuse.

In this regard, I request the Executive Director to follow these matters with keen interest.

E: Security Measures implemented at the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration

I thank the Office of the Executive Director for authorizing the implementation and compliance of the prescribed minimum security standards in the Ministry in collaboration with the Ministry of Safety and Security and the Namibia Central Intelligence Services. These measures were re-emphasized after the unfortunate and regrettable shooting incident at the Global Fund Office in Windhoek.

I should caution all officials and members of the public, that there will be no compromise when it comes to the implementation of these measures. Officials and members of the public are prohibited from entering the premises of the Ministry with fire arms and any form of weapon. Only those service personnel carrying service weapons will be permitted. **The Safety and Security of our staff is of paramount importance to us and as such, we should do everything possible to ensure just that.**

Last but not least, I would like to thank all our staff for the excellent work you have done in the course of 2018. You have done the best you could despite many challenges. I

also wish to reiterate our call to you all, to continue to maintain a high level of discipline, helpfulness to the people we serve, and maintain the spirit of team work.

To our immigration officials: When a foreign visitor arrives at the ports of entry of our country, the first person they encounter is you. When they leave the Country, the last person they encounter is you. You are therefore a de facto ambassador of Namibia. The impression you are making on that individual is one which lasts. What this simply means; is that you can make or break the image of Namibia and her people. Therefore, give our visitors that warm welcoming 'Namibian Smile'. They will appreciate it.

Equally important, is when your happy face says 'bon voyage' to the departing visitors. People must be made to feel welcome and that their stay in Namibia was highly valued.

It is always difficult to bid farewell to someone who is very dear to us. Anette Bayer-Forsingdal has been in the service of our Ministry since 2010 as a consultant under UNICEF, and thereafter, as Director since June 2014. She was involved in the modernisation of our National Population Register System. She was very instrumental in the introduction of the e-Birth and e-Death Notification Systems, and many such good programmes and projects for which our country is recognised as a continental, if not, a world leader.

Anette is leaving us end of March for Canada. Her skills in the area of Population and Civil Registration has not gone unnoticed and as such, the Canadian Authorities have offered her a life-time opportunity for her to go and help set up similar systems there.

I would like on your behalf and on my own behalf, thank Anette for the job well done. We wish you well in your future professional career and assure you that your country would always be ready to welcome you back. Be a good ambassador of the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration, in particular, Namibia in general.

Lastly, I wish you all a year of good health and countless success in your work, and I thank you for your attention.