

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

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MINISTER
MINISTRY OF TRADE & INDUSTRY**

**AT THE ANNUAL STAKEHOLDERS GALA
DINNER**

XWAMA CULTURAL VILLAGE, WINDHOEK

04 DECEMBER 2014

- **Master of Ceremonies**
- **NaCC Board Chairman Mr Festus Hangula and fellow Commissioners**
- **Allow me also to acknowledge the presence of the first Interim Chairperson to the Commission, Mr Douglas Reissner**
- **Mr Tembinkosi Bonakele, Commissioner of Competition Commission of South Africa**
- **Chief Executive Officer of the NaCC, Mr Mihe Gaomab II**
- **And fellow staff members**
- **Distinguished Guests**
- **Members of the Media**

Good evening,

I am delighted to have the opportunity to address this annual stakeholders gala dinner, which also marks the fifth anniversary of the Commission. I believe, as do the Government of the Republic of Namibia, that strong competition law enforcement is critical to the promotion of economic growth.

Now, I do not need to go in-depth into the benefits of competition when I am surrounded by an audience so well-acquainted with the benefits of competition. However, allow me to highlight a few of the benefits that can be derived from competition enforcement. Firstly, competition bolsters the productivity and international competitiveness of the business sector as well as promotes dynamic markets and economic growth. Secondly, companies are faced with vigorous competition and continually pressed to become more efficient and more productive through competition.

Thirdly, competition drives innovation. Without competition there would be little pressure on businesses to introduce new products or new production methods. But the ultimate benefit of competition is that it results in goods and services being provided to consumers at competitive prices.

I have earlier on mentioned that the Commission is celebrating its five years of existence this year. It should be noted that in these short years of existence, the Commission has

made commendable strides in its enforcement of the competition law. The mandate of the Commission is to ensure that the playing field is leveled and therefore it also looks at business conduct that could be harmful for competition.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry, and equally, the Government of the Republic of Namibia proudly attest to the benefits derived through the work of the Commission for the nation. Therefore, I would fail in my duty as the keynote speaker, if I do not emphasized the kind of case load facing the Commission in the enforcement of the competition law.

As mentioned by the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, Mr Hangula and the Chief Executive Officer Mr Gaomab II, the Commission has handled over 300 mergers and acquisitions cases as well as over 20 restrictive business practices cases, since its inception in 2009. Notable among these, is the Walmart-Massmart merger which threw the Commission into the deep end of the law, leading up to a Supreme Court ruling, in which its conditions were upheld.

Another case that stands out is the proposed merger between two emergency evacuation service providers, E-Med Rescue and ISOS, which was prohibited by the Commission as it posed a dominance factor and therefore would not contribute to the growth of the emergency evacuation sector. These are just few of the cases that come to mind.

I am informed, Master of Ceremonies, that the Commission handles 8 to 10 cases of mergers and acquisitions almost every month, a heavy workload, taking into consideration the legal and economical implications that have to be weight with each case.

Globalization and the market dynamics at work, demands that we look constantly embark on efforts that will strengthen the manner in which we conduct activities geared towards economic development. The Namibian Government, through the Ministry of Trade and Industry, continues to find ways and means to bring about economic emancipation of the country for its people. The Growth at Home Policy, aimed at local value addition, in order to grow the Namibian economy to guarantee an improved standard of living for all Namibians, is one such effort undertaken by the Government.

In order to achieve this objective,our challenge is framed within a viable set of ambitious targets namely: to increase Namibian household incomes; support the development of a more competitive business environment and fair trading; increase employment opportunities for all; and improve the industrialisation of the Namibian economy. These targets align with the Government's key goals and priorities as encapsulated in our long-term Vision 2030 and five-year National Development Plans, and therefore reflect the economic and social challenges facing Namibia.

The attainment of these targets will require a significant and sustainable improvement in Namibia's economic performance. Integrated and cooperative efforts driven by the Government and our partners in the private sector will see to it that the improvement required is attained. Alongside other Government bodies, the Ministry of Trade and Industry and its agencies are taking the lead in supporting the Government to shape the required economic agenda.

As the country's leading competition regulation agency, the Commission has significant scope to link our Growth at Home Policy as well as the industrialisation policy to ensure its strategic and operational activities to be developmental centred, and to implement initiatives that have a greater impact on the economy's competitive performance. Businesses everywhere in the world need a fair and equitable trading environment and Namibia is no different.

The Commission needs to work in a way that makes the most of its strategic, operational and regulatory remit to support businesses in order to ensure that a fair competition regime is upheld. Furthermore, the Commission should use its broad domestic, regional and global networks to expand its understanding of business and markets in order to support an effective competition policy.

The past years have been devoted to establishing institutionally the Commission and to enact on implementation of the Competition Law. The Commission has been undergoing a period of fundamental change not only for the institution and for the businesses but also for other stakeholders they serve.

I am made to understand that in the years ahead, the Commission will focus on moving forward as a highly competent and equipped market regulator, especially in addressing market distortions on monopolistic and collusive behaviour and inefficiencies on price formation processes in the country that impact on the consumer welfare and the broader structure of the economy. To this end, its activities are to be driven by the adoption of a National Competition Policy as well as revisions to the Competition Act. The Commission will also not lose sight of the need to continue to cater for public interest goals as it formulates its strategic and operational activities.

Mr Chairman and the CEO, I am extremely proud of the way the Commission has adapted and navigated the first five years of its existence, and what it has achieved in that considered period of time. As at many other occasions, I reiterate the Ministry's continued support in your strive to become an extra-ordinarily effective competition regulation in Namibia, if not around the globe.

And with that I wish you a happy birthday, Namibian Competition Commission and many happy returns!

I might not get the opportunity to meet with some of the stakeholders present here tonight, therefore I wish you all a merry Christmas and a Prosperous and Fruitful 2015.

I thank you.