

Engaging for mutual benefit

INTERVIEW WITH HON MARCO MAKOSO HAUSIKU

MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



MARCO HAUSIKU was born in 1953 and joined SWAPO in 1977. Between 1978 and 1989 he was subject to detention and restriction of movement due to his political activism. In 1990 he was appointed Minister of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation. He has been Minister of Works, Transport and Communication (1992-95), Minister of Prisons (1995-2002) and Minister of Labour (2002-04). He was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2004.

What are the key aims and guiding principles of Namibia’s foreign policy, given the growing importance of Africa to the global economy?

Namibia’s foreign policy is guided by article 96 of the Namibian Constitution and is based on the principles of non-alignment, seeking peaceful resolution of disputes between countries, under the banner of the United Nations, and a commitment to achieving African unity and increasing co-operation among developing countries.

Although a relatively small country, in terms of population, Namibia is proud of the role it plays in international affairs. We are an active participant in a range of international organisations and we enjoy sound diplomatic relations with most countries in the world.

Namibia is a member of the United Nations, the African Union, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Commonwealth, Non-Aligned Movement and other bodies.

The objectives of Namibia’s foreign policy are clear - in short they aim to achieve the following:

- To safeguard Namibia’s sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity. This is the first principle and central objective of the policy and indeed of our diplomacy.
- To promote Namibia’s economic growth and development. While this is primarily a domestic task,

the external engagements was creating conditions that facilitate the fulfillment of these goals. In pursuance of the objective, the government has adopted Vision 2030, the government’s long-term developmental programme for economic development. Vision 2030 has been designed to raise Namibia to the level of an industrialised nation by the year 2030. This vision will only be realised with the full and active involvement of all the sectors of the Namibian society. Against this backdrop and in its quest to uplift the standard of living and prosperity of all its citizens, the Government has adopted the strategy of economic diplomacy, which essentially calls upon all our foreign policy operators to advance our economic interests robustly and assertively, in the face of a rapidly changing global economic environment.

- To foster international peace and security, and regional harmony, through active support for collective initiatives and effective multilateralism. Namibia’s participation in the United Nations peace keeping missions is testimony to this commitment. Namibia has participated in UN operations in East Timor, Liberia, Angola, Cambodia etc. We are also involved in AU operations in Sudan.
- To build a positive image of Namibia abroad, through concerted actions with other agencies of the ►

Namibia’s foreign policy aims to safeguard sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national unity



◀ Government so as to reaffirm the good reputation of the country, and to attract economic partners, investors, tourists and other visitors.

- To protect and assist Namibian citizens abroad, including students and other nationals living or visiting other countries for business, leisure or for any other purpose. This is, a classic consular function, and
- To optimise modern and flexible diplomatic engagement that has the potential to fulfil Namibia's foreign policy.

Global security is a key issue for governments and policy makers. What role can the UN and NATO play in maintaining stability? What part can the African Union play in this context?

All regional and international organisations have vital roles to play in securing security and maintaining stability in the world. Each is guided by a set of mandates according to which it is expected to deal with challenges related to security and stability at any level.

Security has become a concern at national, regional, continental and global levels. It is a reality that affects any country in the world in one way or the other.

I, however, want to restrict myself to the United Nations to which Namibia is a full member and in whose activities Namibia actively participates. The African Union and SADC draw their mandates from the UN Charter and exercise such through their structures and existing policies.

At a summit held in Lusaka in July 2001, the AU took a decision to establish a Peace and Security Council (PSC) through a protocol, which came into force on 26 December 2003. The fourth session of the Executive Council which took place in Addis Ababa elected 15 members of the PSC. The PSC was subsequently launched at the heads of state and government level on 25 May 2004. As a global and continental bodies respectively, the UN and AU focus on the promotion of peace, security and stability as a prerequisite for development and economic growth.

At the official ceremony marking the inauguration of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, in Addis Ababa during May 2004, the then Secretary General of the United Nations Mr Kofi Annan stated that the Peace and Security Council would be a potentially powerful tool for the prevention, management and resolution of violent conflict.

As Africans, we subscribe to that view and we have steadfastly pursued an agenda of facing challenges to security through this mechanism. We are mindful of the fact that conflict prevention and resolution is a difficult and challenging exercise, but we are also convinced that peace, development and economic growth can only be achieved in an environment that is free of threats to security and stability.

How are Namibia's relations with Europe developing? How important is Europe to Namibia as a diplomatic and trading partner?

Namibia enjoys cordial relations with the majority of the European countries and has signed a number of agreements with many of these countries. Recently, there have been many in and out bound visits between Namibia and several European states, characterising the excellent relations that have been cemented over time. Namibia has benefited immensely from development and technical assistance. As we continue to focus on investment and trade promotion, we encourage European businesses to invest in Namibia by forming joint ventures and setting up manufacturing plants. Through multilateral organisations such as the EU and the Commonwealth, we continue to engage European nations at a diplomatic level to reach common understanding on issues. In this context, it is hoped that Europe opens up possibilities, especially in the field of trade, in order to complement many of the commitments that are critical to regional integration and development.

What role will Namibia play in ensuring Africa's prosperity and stability? How are relations with your neighbours developing?

As stated earlier, one of the major objectives of our foreign policy is to foster international peace and security, and regional harmony, through active support for collective initiatives and effective multilateralism. This includes building and maintaining sound relations with our neighbours, partaking in joint efforts to prevent conflict and to build an economically strong region through integration.

Namibia therefore attaches great importance to its relations with SADC member states and other African ►

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Fostering international peace, security and regional harmony



The political independence of Namibia was gained through global efforts

Namibia's foreign policy; ensuring political stability for the next generation

◀ countries. Hence, harmonisation of multilateral and bilateral co-operation is a priority. The SADC countries share common political, security and economic goals. As an active member, Namibia is committed to co-operation through sustained regional development and economic integration.

In strengthening the relations within SADC member-states, Namibia is guided by the reciprocal openness of the partner countries with regards to co-operation in all relevant areas, such as strengthening cross-border mechanisms to solve problems of drug-trafficking, small arms smuggling, the illicit sale of diamonds and stock-theft. Therefore, agreements with SADC partners are based on the principle of mutual interest. The creation of joint mechanisms for the promotion of trade and investment for regional development, and interaction between specific regions of Namibia and those of the SADC member states also receive our focused attention. Namibia actively supports the collective efforts by SADC member states to develop a framework of investment promotion, to secure a greater share of the global pool of foreign direct investment. Our country is pressing for the acceleration of the implementation of the SADC trade agreement. We stand for the fast-track development of the SADC free trade area, which was launched on 1 September 2000. This will go a long way towards making the SADC region more attractive to potential investors and distributors of goods and services. We encourage investment in neighbouring countries by the Namibian business community.

How important is regional integration to Africa's development? Are NEPAD and ECOWAS helping to reinforce the objectives of the African Union?

NEPAD is a social and economic development

programme of the AU, aimed at addressing the multiple challenges facing our people. Our heads of state have committed themselves to the programme. Namibia remains part of that commitment.

Namibia is equally committed to the African Union decision to integrate NEPAD activities into those of the AU Commission. There is no doubt that, if properly implemented, NEPAD will have tremendous benefits for the continent, its sub-regions and individual countries.

ECOWAS is another building block of the economic community and no doubt has made progress in areas that are set out in the Abuja Treaty. All regional economic communities (RECs) will eventually facilitate the completion of the African development programme.

Southern African countries have committed themselves to reinforcing their regional integration through economic harmonisation. A regional plan approved in August 2003 in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania's capital, by SADC focuses on promoting trade, economic liberalisation and development as a means of facilitating the establishment of a SADC common market. This requires completing the formation of a free-trade area, with 85 percent of SADC trade to be liberalised by 2008, and 100 percent in 2012.

How would you define Namibia's global role in the coming decade? What is your vision?

The political independence of Namibia was gained through global efforts. Namibia has, since independence, established more global relations, not only to draw benefits from these relations, but also to support international efforts designed to create a peaceful world, build stronger and larger mutual understanding and a fruitful cooperation among all nations.

As a small nation within the global community, Namibia has no pretensions as to the role it can play in world affairs. Therefore, its attention is focused on the immediate neighbours, the SADC region and the continent of Africa. These are followed by the nations of the Non-Aligned Movement and developing South, the Commonwealth, and the broad community of nations within which many of Namibia's friendships were forged in the difficult days of our liberation struggle, led by SWAPO.

Namibia looks to the world with expectation of a young state, confident in faith in the rule of international law and multilateralism, as exemplified, by the United Nations.

We have embraced a vision of being a prosperous and industrialised nation developed by her human resources, enjoying peace, harmony and political stability by the year 2030. Our efforts over the next decade and beyond will be geared towards achieving that vision by seeking to work together with other nations and international organisations to achieve stability, harmony and sustained economic growth and development for the benefit of all people. **F**

