

# Economic diplomacy

## INTERVIEW WITH HON UTONI NUJOMA

MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**UTONI NUJOMA** holds a LLB Degree from the University of Warwick and a LLN Degree in Public International Law from Lund University in Sweden. In exile in the 1980s he served as Deputy Secretary General of the Pan African Youth Movement in Algiers. On returning to Namibia he worked in a firm of attorneys and became the Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice. He served in a variety of roles in government including Chairperson of the Law Reform and Development Commission and Deputy Minister of Justice. He became Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2010.

### What are the key Objectives and Guiding Principles of Namibia's Foreign Policy?

Namibia's Foreign Policy is based on, and guided by, the Principles that are enshrined in the country's Constitution, primarily Article 96, which prescribes the State's preoccupations in its international relations. At the implementation level, the country's White Paper on Foreign Policy and Diplomacy Management also guides us in our interaction with others. In this regard, five foreign policy objectives have been identified:

- Namibia adopted and maintains a policy of non-alignment by which in a then bi-polar world the country would not align itself with one side at the exclusion of the other but rather cooperates with any of the sides in as far as the promotion and furtherance of our foreign policy interests are concerned. Up to this day, our cooperation with others is not guided by our partners' ideologies but rather by our consideration as to whether such cooperation would serve our Foreign Policy interests or not;
- Namibia promotes international cooperation, peace and security. The promotion of international peace and security occupies a central place in our country's Foreign Policy but this requires the cooperation of the international community as a whole. This is underpinned by our conviction that where there is no peace and security, no durable and sustainable development can take place. Indeed, the converse is also true that the absence of development may also provide be a prelude to political strife and insecurity;
- Namibia strives to create and maintain just and mutually beneficial relations among nations. Cooperation among nations is vital for the maintenance of international peace and security. However, it is human nature that cooperation can only flourish to the extent that each party derives benefits and receives a sense of justice from the cooperative relation. It is therefore, of vital importance that relations among nations are based on the principles of justice and respect for one another's sovereignty whether one is big or small, rich or poor and whether one is strong militarily or not. In the absence of justice and mutual benefits, cooperation will suffer and the opposite of cooperation is chaos in which the proverbial "dog eats dog" could be the order of the day;
- The next objective is to foster respect for international law and treaty obligations. International law that is expressed in numerous international treaties,

protocols, agreements and other legal instruments, is meant to facilitate the maintenance of international peace and security. For this reason, we place emphasis on the importance of multilateralism, which provides a platform for all to be heard in order to facilitate compromises and consensus on issues of international importance. Consensus and mutual understanding are vital for the maintenance on international peace and security. Unilateralism and the practice of double standards in international affairs is therefore, the greatest enemy of international peace, as the victims of unilateral actions would resent any injustice that has been committed against them and given an opportunity, they would take revenge; and

e) Namibia encourages the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means whereby we encourage dialogue among disputing parties in order to reach agreements on the way forward. Dialogue removes misunderstandings and creates fertile grounds in which peaceful coexistence germinates. For this reason, we have been participating in United Nations, African Union and SADC peacekeeping operations right from the day of our Independence. We believe this is one way in which we contribute to the peaceful settlement of international disputes by peaceful means. The use of and/or threats to use force in order to settle international disputes is flawed with shortcomings in that the user of force must be assured of the continued existence of such force, otherwise the recipient of the use of force will strike back one day.

### Given recent instability – particularly in North Africa and the Middle East – how can global security be maintained and what role can regional and international organizations play in this context?

North Africa and the Middle East are experiencing mass political protests as citizens call for good governance and democratic participation. This precarious situation is a cause for concern because it could be emulated elsewhere and be used or even hijacked by some who do not necessarily share democratic ideals.

The political uprising in Tunisia, which forced the former President to flee the country into exile in Saudi Arabia, has provoked similar protests in other parts of North Africa and the Middle East.

Namibia has been closely observing the situation in the Arab Republic of Egypt, the major economy in

## Namibia believes that our partnership should strive to bridge the development divide between Africa and Europe

North Africa. We commend the people of Egypt for demonstrating restraint at the height of the protests and thus avoiding bloodshed. We hope that the transition to democracy will be inclusive to allow an outcome acceptable to different political and social formations in that country.

Since the beginning of the crisis in Libya in mid-February 2011, Namibia is on record as having recognized the legitimate aspirations of the Libyan people and called for dialogue involving the Libyan government and peaceful protestors.

Consistent with the African Union Peace and Security Council decision referred to above, the government of Namibia rejects and condemns the Western military attacks against Libya, and calls for such attacks to stop immediately. Furthermore, Namibia reaffirms its full support for the AU Peace and Security Council ad hoc Committee of Heads of State and Government to carry out its mandate of facilitating dialogue between Libyan parties to find a peaceful negotiated solution to the political crisis.

Namibia is strongly committed to multilateral diplomacy, with the UN playing the central role in dealing with global challenges and threats to international peace and security. We do not believe that the UN was established for the purpose of waging or sanctioning the waging of war but rather for making peace where there is conflict. To this end, we reaffirm the imperative need for a comprehensive reform of the UN, especially the Security Council, with a view to making it more representative, effective, democratic and accountable.

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### **How are Namibia's relations with Europe developing? How important is Europe, as a bloc, and individual European countries as diplomatic and trading partners?**

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Namibia's political and economic linkages with individual European countries as well as the European Union play a major role in our foreign policy. We consider the EU as one of our important partners and attach great importance to strong and durable relations with the EU countries. Many of Namibia's traditional allies and friends are found among the nations of Central and Eastern Europe. Relations between Namibia and Germany are of a special character and, indeed multi-faceted due to historical reasons. Interaction with many of these influential European states provides Namibia with important inputs for development and economic growth.

The EU is one of the most important trading partners for Namibia and the ACP countries. The AU/EU Strategy is one of the important vehicles for cooperation between our two continents and should be nurtured through processes of interaction and consultation in order for it to be meaningful. The last Africa-Europe Summit has demonstrated the

commitment of our two continents to the strategic partnership which we have committed ourselves to. Africa and Europe are driven by a common agenda and are faced with common challenges with an emphasis on continued political dialogue. We appreciate the efforts of the EU in assisting Africa developing the African Peace and Security Architecture.

The Economic Partnership Agreement is a result of the various engagements between Africa and the European Union, such as the Cotonou Agreement and the joint Africa-EU Strategy, which is tasked with the responsibility of taking the relationship to a new strategic level with a strengthened political partnership and enhanced cooperation at all levels.

Namibia believes that our partnership should strive to bridge the development divide between Africa and Europe through the strengthening of economic cooperation and the promotion of sustainable development in both continents. In this regard I would like to stress the importance of the fair treatment of exports to the EU. I am pleased that recent negotiations discussed unresolved issues, and I am positive that we will achieve a full and comprehensive EPA.

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### **What role can the Commonwealth play in promoting trade and diplomatic relations? What are your hopes for CHOGM in Perth later this year?**

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The role of the Commonwealth in promoting trade and diplomatic relations can be traced to its founding statement which clearly outlines the Commonwealth as an association of sovereign nations that support each other and work together towards international goals. Commonwealth countries share common heritage in language, cultural law, education and democratic traditions, amongst others.

Since its evolution 60yrs ago, and with a Membership of 53 countries, the Commonwealth continues to play a significant role in the international political and economic architecture through consultations and cooperation in the common interest of their peoples and the promotion of international understanding through dialogue and cooperation.

For example, at the annual Commonwealth Foreign Ministers Meeting that was held on the margins of the 65th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, Ministers had an opportunity to discuss and consult on important global issues relating to the Global financial crisis, on specific themes that add value to the United Nations work, the ongoing mandate on Environment and Climate Change, the implementation of MDG'S and the preparations for the Rio+20 Conference and LDC IV.

The Commonwealth Business Forum and SADC bilateral consultations currently underway in London is expected to exchange views and perspectives on

## NEPAD can help reinforce the overall objectives of the African Union through identifying creative global partnerships

how to move towards an integrated single market, that will help attract international business as well as to strengthen intra-SADC trade and investment. I hope that the Perth CHOGM will strengthen the Commonwealth further in its efforts to improve the standard of living of its family.

### **Namibia attaches great importance to relations with SADC Member States. What are Namibia's priorities and objectives within the SADC framework?**

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) started as the Frontline States whose objective was the political liberation of Southern Africa. SADC was preceded by the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), which was formed in Lusaka, Zambia on April 01, 1980.

On August 17, 1992, at their Summit held in Windhoek, Namibia, the Heads of State and Government signed the SADC Treaty and Declaration that effectively transformed the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) into the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The objective also shifted to include economic integration following the independence of the rest of the Southern African countries.

Namibia like other countries joined the Southern Africa Development Community for the following reasons:

- To promote sustainable and equitable economic growth and socio-economic development that will ensure poverty alleviation with the ultimate objective of its eradication.
- To enhance the standard and quality of life of the people of Namibia in particular and Southern Africa in general and, support the socially disadvantaged through regional integration;
- To promote common political values, systems and other shared values which are transmitted through institutions which are democratic, legitimate and effective;
- To consolidate, defend and maintain democracy, peace, security and stability within its borders and thought the region.

SADC like other regional blocks complements the role of the African Union.

Namibia as a member of SADC, benefits from the wider market that attracts more foreign investors. There are also several infrastructural projects that Namibia benefits from as a member of SADC, namely, the western corridor, the Kazungula Bridge, to mention but a few, that link the country to the wider SADC market. Namibia's port of Walvis Bay is also used as a hub of trade for the landlocked SADC Members.

In addition, SADC quota provides an opportunity for exchanging the experts among Member States and in this regard, Namibian can benefit from employment opportunities within other SADC Member States.

On the political front, the SADC Brigade provides regional security.

### **What are the national and international challenges facing the African Continent, in general, and Namibia in particular? How can NEPAD and ECOWAS help reinforce the overall objectives of the African Union.**

The African Continent is faced with challenges such as:

- Unemployment;
- Lack of proper economic and social balance for increasingly urbanized populations;
- Infrastructure development, energy supply and transport, which also constitute major bottleneck for Africa's growth;

Namibia is no exception to the above-mentioned challenges. The current unemployment rate in Namibia is unacceptably high.

NEPAD can help reinforce the overall objectives of the African Union through identifying creative global partnerships, including the G8, as a means to support the delivery of its development objectives. These objectives include attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

### **How would you define Namibia's global role in the medium term? What is your vision for Namibia's foreign policy?**

Namibia's global role both in the medium and long term is to contribute, to the best of our ability and within the confines of our resources, to the maintenance of international peace and security and my vision for my country's Foreign Policy is that it translates into socio-economic benefits for my country and its people. For this reason, we have recently embarked upon what we call "economic diplomacy" whereby our diplomatic interaction with others is geared towards economic benefits for our people. Indeed, our participation in the Commonwealth Business Forum represents our economic diplomacy at the SADC level. **F**



Economic diplomacy focuses on the welfare of the Namibian people