

## XIV WAY GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### OPENING SPEECH BY H.E. DR. SAM NUJOMA, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA, 21 FEBRUARY 2005

Master of Ceremonies

Right Honourable Datuk Seri Haji Mohammad Ali Rustam

President of the World Assembly of Youth

Honourable Ministers

Honourable Members of Parliament

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Esteemed Vice-Presidents and Executive Committee Members of the World Assembly of Youth

Distinguished Delegates

Distinguished Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted and honoured to be with you today at this opening ceremony of the 14<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of World Assembly of Youth. It is indeed an honour and a historic occasion for Namibia to host this internationally renowned and important meeting of the World Assembly of Youth.

I would like to wholeheartedly and warmly welcome all the delegates to this important General Assembly. In particular, I would like to wish all the delegates from abroad a pleasant and enjoyable stay in our country.

I am informed that you are gathered here to discuss effective ways and means of addressing one of the greatest challenges of our time, the HIV/Aids pandemic. As you are aware, it is the young people who mostly bear the brunt of this deadly pandemic. Thus, it is fitting that you have chosen a theme that relates to young people and their awareness in respect of the HIV/Aids pandemic which is: *“Youth Rise to meet the HIV/Aids challenge”*.

Indeed, HIV/Aids is a serious and pressing challenge that young people in Namibia, in Africa and throughout the world are facing. Current statistics indicate that more than half of new HIV/Aids infections are to be found in young people who are between the ages of 16 and 24. As young people, you must take personal responsibility of ensuring that you are protected from infection and do not infect others. You must remember that you are the future leaders and your generation must exercise responsible behaviour to be able to lead our common home, the global village to greater social justice, equity and economic prosperity for all humanity.

Master of Ceremonies,

The world is integrating economically, socially and culturally but it is disintegrating politically. However, this disintegration can be contained and rooted out if you as young people, who are the future leaders, continue to come together and work together in unity like you are gathered here to deliberate on issues of mutual concern. Therefore, I would like to urge you to become proponents of a just socio-economic development order in your respective countries, regions and the world at large. As future leaders, it is now the time for you to look at and ponder the current and future challenges, especially in the fields of science and technology which are the backbone of economic growth and industrial development.

I believe that the youth can only effectively contribute to economic development when they have acquired the necessary knowledge and skills. It is for this reason that in Namibia, the Government has prioritised education and training of our youth to enable them to play a meaningful role in the socio-economic development of our country. Currently, two thirds of our national budget is allocated to the social sectors, including education and training.

Master of Ceremonies,

There is no doubt that the process of globalisation poses several threats to developing countries in various ways, including trade imbalance between the developing and industrialised countries, economic dependence caused by unfair trade regimes, high interest rates imposed on developing countries by international and multi-national lending institutions, as well as uneven distribution of resources and technologies.

This unjust system has undoubtedly caused suffering and hardships among the people of the Southern hemisphere. As the youth, it is your duty to seek to create a more human and just world order. Thus, it is only through your relentless commitment to positive and purposeful change that you can meaningfully address the prevailing social, cultural and economic realities that have subjected millions of people in Africa, Asia, Latin America and elsewhere to hunger, poverty, disease and squalor. There are no reasons to justify such state of affairs.

I view this assembly as a beacon of progress and the basis upon which the youth can position themselves as active and dedicated citizens of the world. It is also pleasing to note that the World Assembly of Youth has been mobilising young people to participate in nation-building efforts in their respective countries. The World Assembly of Youth has also been harnessing the energies and potential of the youth to overcome the social and economic challenges. These efforts must be welcomed and encouraged, as a way of empowering the youth and making them active participants in the process of socio-economic development and the establishment of a just and humane world order.

Thus, as you continue to participate in important discussions in this Assembly, you must espouse a vision of a brighter future and work on new methods that will enable you to tackle the challenges that you will face along the way. It will not be easy, however, through determined action and commitment you will achieve your objectives.

Master of Ceremonies,

The youth have a responsibility to demand from their leaders to bring an end to the damaging and unnecessary wars which are taking place in some parts of the world. They must take a leading role and impress it upon their leaders to always advance and pursue peaceful solutions to conflicts. In fact, I urge you to always aim to create a world free from armed conflicts and civil wars so that humankind can live in total peace and harmony without the threat of war. You are the future leaders and the onus is on your shoulders to find ways and means of preventing conflicts so that countries can live at peace with their neighbours and within themselves.

I would therefore like to wish you all productive and fruitful deliberations as you tackle the important and difficult issues which are before you during this 14<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Youth.

I hope that unity of purpose and action will be your guiding light as you ponder and discuss various challenges that face humanity today, including, the danger of HIV/Aids and come up with useful insights and practical suggestions on how Governments, civil society and other stakeholders can address them to ensure prosperity of all our peoples.

With these few words, I now take this opportunity to declare the 14<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of World Assembly of Youth officially open.

I thank you.