

'A GIANT STEP FORWARD FOR NAMIBIAN PEOPLE'

THE adoption of the constitution marked "a historic milestone and a giant step forward towards the completion of the Namibian people's long, bitter and bloody struggle for independence", Swapo president and Namibian president-elect Sam Nujoma said on Friday.

Speaking at the special session of the CA, Mr Nujoma described the event as "one of the most important and memorable acts of self-determination...for the Namibian people".

He said the CA had known that the people wanted to proceed to independence immediately and had worked with a great sense of urgency to fulfil its task, "confounding all the doubters in the process".

"This constitution is not a perfect document. But for us in Swapo, it is an impressive summation of the universally acclaimed principles, ideas and values of a democratic society," he said.

"We can, indeed, state with confidence that all the pillars of a democratic political culture have been laid down in this constitution."

The Swapo leader praised the inclusion of a Bill of Rights to protect the individual against the abuse of state power and said this should give the people faith in the future of their nation.

Mr Nujoma also said those who had suffered degradation and deprivation in the past could look forward to a better future of social justice, peace and progress, because affirmative action was included in the constitution.

At the same time, he emphasized

the need to forge "a single, national identity out of the several different ethnic units in this country".

Mr Nujoma thanked the minority parties in the Assembly for the "political maturity and sense of patriotic responsibility" they had displayed during the writing of the constitution.

"This great beginning holds forth bright prospects for a happy and constructive working relationship among the parties in the future," he added.

"I would like to conclude my brief statement by saying to the Namibian people: forward with national reconciliation, unity, peace and progress. Long live the constitution of the Republic of Namibia."

COLLECTIVE EFFORT

Democratic Turnhalle Alliance vice-president Mishake Muyongo underlined that the hammering out of the constitution had been a collective effort "of the elected representatives of the people of Namibia".

"It provides for the upliftment of the vast majority of our people," he said.

"The DTA is satisfied it contains guidelines that will make it one of the best in the world."

Coupled to this, affirmative action

to redress the injustices of the past while at the same time protecting the rights of property provided for the birth of a new nation, he continued.

"We are adding another multi-party democracy to the few in Africa."

Mr Muyongo said the DTA was also satisfied that the constitution provided for sufficient checks and balances.

The DTA, he said, would fulfil the role of a loyal and effective parliamentary opposition.

DETAINEE ISSUE

The controversial question of detainees still allegedly being held by Swapo was raised by UDF leader Chief Justus Garoeb.

Mr Garoeb said although the UDF was glad about the acceptance of the 1982 principles, it was unhappy about the fact that the CA had not dealt with the question of alleged Swapo detainees.

"If it remains unresolved it will leave an indelible scar on the face of the United Nations, and more immediately will become a formidable obstacle to reconciliation, peace and prosperity," he said.

At the same time the UDF leader paid tribute to the "goodwill and statesmanship which has led to this watershed".



TWO of the key players in the Namibian independence process, UN Special Representative Martti Ahtisaari (left) and South African Administrator-General Louis Pienaar share some behind-the-scenes stories at Friday's historic occasion.

Mr Garoeb added that the UDF would support Namibia becoming a legitimate member of the UN and the Commonwealth.

'OUR LAND TOO'

ACN chairperson Jannie de Wet said while his party did not agree with some aspects of the constitution, such as references to the harm done by apartheid, it accepted the whole of the constitution as it guaranteed democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Mr de Wet described the adoption of the document as the "the most important event in the history of the new Namibia".

"We now have one common reality," he said, "the goal of building a new nation in a prosperous country".

Mr de Wet said it was essential the incoming government was constituted as soon as possible. "You can't eat the constitution and you can't live on independence alone," he said.

The ACN man gave assurances that his party's supporters would stay in Namibia and contribute to development at all levels: social, political, economic and educational.

"This land belongs to us all as well as this constitution. This constitution must be the pride of every Namibian citizen," he said.

Mr de Wet committed his party to upholding the laws of the Republic of Namibia "to the best of our ability". "God bless our country," he concluded.

'NO SMALL POTATOES'

The fact that Namibians had written their own constitution in only 80 days was "a phenomenal achievement" by an African nation, and showed the people of Namibia were "no small potatoes", NPF leader Moses Katjuongua said.

Mr Katjuongua said the constitution protected everybody, "even those who did not accept it in its entirety, like Mr Koos Pretorius and Mr Jan de Wet", he said to some laughter.

The NPF would respect and uphold the constitution and would play a positive opposition role.

"We are looking forward to the future with hope and optimism," he added.

Mr Katjuongua added that he hoped the positive developments in Namibia

would give impetus to events in South Africa... "to search for practical ways and means to solve their own problems in the interest of the region and whole world".

'INSPIRES LOYALTY'

Federal Convention of Namibia representative Mr Mburumba Kerina said quality government depended on a quality constitution.

And, he said, the document was so powerful as to inspire loyalty as well as inspiring new hope for progress and reconciliation.

"There is no doubt Namibia is emerging as a new power centre in southern Africa," he said.

Mr Kerina said he was proud to have been a part of the assembly "and to work with those from whom I have been estranged for so long".

RETURN OF THE LAND

The adoption of the constitution marked the "return of the land to its rightful owners" after more than a century of colonial oppression during which black Namibians had not known peace and dignity, NNF leader Vekuui Rukoro said.

Mr Rukoro said the long struggle had eventually realised the revolutionary aspirations of the oppressed for national liberation. In this process those who sacrificed their lives should not be forgotten.

The NNF man commended the protection of human rights - especially the abolition of the death sentence and detention without trial - as well as the upholding of workers' and women's rights.

Mr Rukoro also pointed out that the constitution outlined certain minimum policy considerations which would serve as the basis for national reconciliation and harmony.

"I am optimistic that our experiment in democratic government is going to pass the test of time," he said.

Mr Rukoro added that he had been impressed by the willingness of all to compromise in the national interest. The constitution should not just be kept in the archives, but be written on the hearts of the people, so they could make it work together, he concluded.

The CA is scheduled to meet again at 10pm on March 20 to elect a president for Namibia.

SWAPO

RALLY



VENUE: Nomtsoub Soccer Stadium
DATE: Saturday, 17 February
TIME: 14h00

MAIN SPEAKER:
Comrade Moses Garoeb

Everybody Welcome!

THE MARK OF A LEADER IS THE ABILITY TO PICK A WINNER. ADVERTISE IN THE NAMIBIAN.