

# **REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**



**Statement by His Excellency Nangolo Mbumba,  
President of the Republic of Namibia, on the  
occasion of the ELCIN-Etumo Festival 2024**

**Omandongo, Onayena Constituency  
Oshikoto Region  
July 6-7, 2024**

Check against delivery

- **Directors of Ceremonies; Hon Peya Mushelenga, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation; Deacon Fillipus Shangala and Ms. Leena Kaveto;**
- **Leader of the Eastern Dioceses, Reverend Hilja Nghaangulwa;**
- **All ELCIN Emeritus Bishops present;**
- **ELCIN General Secretary; Dr Johannes Haufiku**
- **All ELCIN Pastors and those from sister Churches present;**
- **All Ministers and senior Government officials present;**
- **Omukwaniilwa Tatekulu Fillemon Shuumbwa Nangolo, Ondonga Traditional Authority;**
- **Other Esteemed Traditional Leaders;**
- **Specially invited Guests;**
- **Dear Fellow Christians and Namibians; and**
- **Members of the Media;**

- 1. I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the leadership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) for having invited me to partake in this historic commemoration of the 154<sup>th</sup> Etumo Festival.**
  
- 2. The Church demonstrated faith to invite me, knowing I would come. Therefore, I have decided to honour the Church's invitation since I am also a product of the Church and a member of ELCIN. We are all cognisant that Namibia is a predominantly Christian country. However, as the President I am representing all Namibians within the spirit of Article 21 (1) (c) of the Namibian Constitution. This Article accords Namibians the right to practice the religion of their choice, which means that no one can force any one to believe or belong to a particular faith. It is pertinent that all citizens understand this point.**

- 3. Today we celebrate a pivotal moment in the history of Christianity in Namibia, when in July 1870, Finnish missionaries, arrived here at Omandongo to open the way for the gospel in Namibia. Their hard work and determination has paid off. They never grew weary in planting good seeds and what we are witnessing today is the result of their evangelical endeavors – a bountiful harvest manifested in the unity and fellowship of worshippers of Christ Jesus.**
  
- 4. Undeniably, the arrival of missionaries here at Omandongo and their exploits are underscored by Isaiah 9:2 which reads, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness — on them light has shined.” Indeed, through the power of the gospel, they enabled those who walked in darkness**

**to see the shining light. Through the power of the gospel they helped shine the light on those who lived in a land of darkness.**

- 5. Against this backdrop, the 154<sup>th</sup> ELCIN-ETUMO Festival offers us an opportunity to come together as a people enlightened to the truth of the gospel, as Christians, to reflect, and to reinforce our values and fellowship.**
- 6. In this regard, I am pleased to witness the congregation of ELCIN deaneries from the Eastern and Western dioceses at this historic event to advance the Church's mandate of serving spiritually and emotionally the people, most notably the needy, through the gospel.**
- 7. Omandongo was the first Finnish missionary station in Namibia. After receiving a warm welcome by Omukwaniilwa Shikongo**

**shaKalulu, the missionaries settled here and commenced with their work, holding the first ever sermon in the region.**

- 8. The mission faced several challenges including when the mission station had to be abandoned late 1888. After being chased away by a traditional leader, it was relocated to Olukonda and years later the Mission's Headquarters was transferred to Oniipa where it remains until today.**
- 9. However, despite facing difficulties, the missionaries persisted and laid the foundation for the establishment of a strong ELCIN Church as we know it today in Namibia. They also brought with them the first methods of modern medicine, and built clinics, hospitals and schools, as well as introduced vocational training to the Northern rural areas which were denied**

**these lifesaving basic amenities. Most importantly, their teachings on social justice and equality of mankind inspired many Namibians to take up the cause for the Freedom of Namibia. Many of our Liberation Struggle leaders are products of missionary or Church schools such as in Ongwediva, Engela, Oshigambo, Odibo, Dobra, Okombahe, Gibeon and other many church stations.**

- 10. Beyond these contributions, the spiritual enrichment brought by missionary work is immeasurable. The message of Christ's love, forgiveness, and salvation took root and flourished. Churches became safe havens where people gathered not only to worship but to support one another, creating a strong sense of community and belonging.**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

- 11. In Namibia, Christianity and the work of the Christian Church in particular, is intertwined with the struggle of the Namibian people for freedom from Apartheid colonialism.**
- 12. The principles of service and sacrifice which play an important role in the Christian faith, likewise played a significant role in the Struggle for Independence. The Book of Mark 10:45 reads as follows," For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." It is clear from this biblical passage that there is a distinct correlation between service and sacrifice. Those who are called to serve, in whatever form, in whatever field, in whatever sector often have to do so, while forfeiting their own leisure or wellbeing.**



**13. In the scriptures, Jesus Christ had to give up his youth, his family life and eventually his life so that humankind could find salvation. During our Liberation Struggle, many Namibians forfeited their youthful years, time with their families and even paid the ultimate price with their lives, for their brothers and sisters to achieve freedom.**

**14. As we reflect today on the remarkable achievements of the Missionaries and how they have transformed our society positively, it is crucial to ask ourselves: What can we do to build on this legacy? How can we be modern-day missionaries in our own right, contributing to the ongoing development and spiritual nourishment of all Namibians?**

**15. As Christians, we should continue to support modern day mission work through financial contributions, volunteering, and involvement**

**in Church activities. We should endeavor to live out our faith by adhering to the biblical teachings and reflecting compassion, love and support to our neighbors and those in need as demonstrated by the early missionaries.**

**16. Let us never be discouraged, dismayed or disheartened, no matter what difficulties or hardships we face because as Isaiah 54:10 states, "Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed."**

**17. In closing, let us remember and honor the extraordinary legacy of the missionaries who came before us. Their work has transformed Namibia and shown us the profound impact of faith in action. As we celebrate the ELCIN ETUMO Festival, may we be inspired to**

**continue the noble mission of service and sacrifice to our fellow human beings with fervor and dedication, as we witnessed from the pioneering missionaries in Namibia.**

**18. By so doing, we will create a stable, peaceful and inclusive Namibian nation that exemplifies the tenets of our Christian faith espoused by Romans 14:19 which reads as follows, “Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification”.**

**I thank you.**