



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

Keynote Address

Deputy Minister of Sport, Youth and National Service

Honourable Emma Kantema-Gaomas

at the

Queen's Baton Relay Gala Dinner

14 December 2021

Swakopmund



Director of ceremonies,

Mr Abner Xoagub President of the Namibia National Olympic Committee and

Board members present,

Invited distinguished Guests,

Representatives of the Sport Fraternity,

Distinguish Invited Guests;

Members of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen;

1. The Ministry of Sport, Youth and National Service is delighted to be part of this prestigious event, closing off what has been an incredible year for sport in Namibia, with the Queens Baton Relay in the Mighty Erongo Region. Comrade Governor, allow me to thank you for a warm welcome to your region and point out that through your youthful and visionary leadership, we have hosted many successful sport and youth events in the Mighty Erongo region this year. I can never overemphasize my gratitude to your office for the consistent support. I would like to reiterate the commitment of the Ministry to provide an enabling environment for sports, and as the Ministry responsible and entrusted with the development of sports we are intensifying our efforts to realize that objective.
2. On 7 October 2021, the Queen's Baton began a 294-day Relay through the 72 nations and territories of the Commonwealth, estimated to travel over 140 00km. The Baton carries a message from Queen Elizabeth the second that will be read at the opening of the Commonwealth Games July 28th, 2022. The Baton is integral in showcasing the achievements of Baton bearers, the personal journeys of Commonwealth athletes, and the stories from a generation of young people making waves of change in their community. The Queen's Baton for the Birmingham 2022 Queen's Baton Relay champions the individuality in humanity and celebrates bringing people together. It embodies the idea that every individual has distinctive lived experiences that are threaded and woven into a collective

tapestry of cultures. The Baton form is entwined with unique components and displays connectivity to represent the “power of collaboration.”

Director of Ceremonies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. The “power of collaboration” embodied by the Queen’s Baton Relay is a notion we have to embrace to the fullest for the growth and development of all commonwealth member states. In what turned out to be an incredibly extraordinary year, our immediate future is profoundly affected by the prevailing Covid 19 pandemic, which has thrust public health into the spotlight. Despite swift responses from our government and others across the commonwealth, the truth is, livelihoods were diminished and lives were lost. What is worrisome is the conduct of the developed nations in response to the pandemic, having given rise to concepts such as “vaccinations apartheid.” This “power of collaboration” signified by the Baton in representation of the 72 nations and territories in the commonwealth is crucial notion and virtue in dealing with this contemporary challenge, not only as commonwealth nations but globally. Now more than ever, we have to lean on multilateralism to provide solutions to the pandemic and other global challenges.

4. The Commonwealth amplifies the voice of African nations, providing it with an additional means of lobbying major geo-political and diplomatic players like the UK, India and Canada, amongst others. It also provides a potential framework for resolving disputes between members, whom already have very few platforms where they can sit as “equals” despite huge disparities in GDP and geopolitical influence. It is important however, to continue strengthening the bonds that ties the commonwealth together through activities such as the Queen’s Baton Relay and the flagship Commonwealth Games that will take place next year in Birmingham, United Kingdom.

Director of Ceremonies, Ladies and Gentlemen

5. The role of sport is believed to be concrete in business terms as an industry with unparalleled global reach and power. Globally, sport-related turn-over amounts to three per cent of world total economic activity. In some African nations, sport-related turn-over equals that of the automotive and food industries. However, sport as a business industry is one area that has not been fully explored in Namibia. Although Namibians support many sporting codes, the economic benefits do not reflect the same. This requires collaborative efforts with corporates and private sector investment to ensure that we have more world class sport facilities and professional athletes in order to compete on the global stage. Events such as the Queens Baton Relay offers opportunities to further deepen dialogue and collaboration on the professionalization of sport and the resultant economic spin-offs for the sport fraternity.
6. The business of sport today demands a paradigm shift. Gone are the days when sport was only for recreation. It is a business with viable economic outputs, and should be treated as such. As a Ministry we continue to devise strategy to advocate for the sports industry as one of the initiatives to empower the youth. That is why the incorporation of sports in NDP 5 and subsequent advocacy for professionalization of sports in Namibia is important. Sport can eradicate poverty as it has the potential to create employment and contributes to economic development. That is why we must all commit ourselves to redouble our efforts for this next stage of our journey.

Director of Ceremonies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

7. As I conclude, I want to encourage our sport men and women who are currently taking part in the qualifiers to work hard, remain committed and diligent in their efforts to represent Namibia at next year's Commonwealth Games. I am reliably informed that we will be represented in ave indicated athletes in the following

disciplines: Aquatics, Athletics (including para sport), Boxing, Cycling, Gymnastics, Hockey, Rugby 7's, Triathlon and Wrestling.

8. Finally, on behalf of Government through the Ministry of Sport Youth and National Service, I would like to thank Namibia National Olympics Committee and Namibia Paralympics Committee for organizing successful events as part of the relay. In lieu of the loaded programme with so many events, it must not have been an easy task administratively and logistically. We appreciate the companies and organization who accepted the responsibility to augment the organizers and governments efforts with the immense financial support towards the relay. Our corporate sponsors have been on form in support of sport this year, please join me in giving them a round of applause for the outstanding support through 2021. All stakeholders that either contributed directly or indirectly to this event, including the British High Commission, Athletics Namibia, Namibia Sport Commission and the Directorate of Sport, your work is integral in our collective efforts to build a professional sports fraternity.

9. I thank you.