

# CoD



## Congress of Democrats *MANIFESTO 2009*

### Letter from the President

Dear Namibians

On the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of November, 2009 all eligible Namibians, young and old, will participate in electing a new president and a new government. We need to elect a new government that will change things for the better in Namibia. We all know what is wrong in our country and society. The present government has failed us in so many ways. At school, there were not enough classrooms, books and other learning materials. Many of us had to drop out of school, and could not proceed to University or train for a trade.

There have not been any jobs; and times have been very tough. Corruption is rife amongst government politicians and public officials and the current government is either unwilling or powerless to stop it. Crime is high and worsens every day. Our prisons and police cells are full to overflowing.

We in the CoD have carefully considered the situation. Our conditions are getting worse daily; there is no time to lose. Now is the time for **CHANGE**.

**I AM THEREFORE COMMITTED TO CHANGING THE PRESENT SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION IN OUR COUNTRY.**

When you go to the polls in November, vote carefully and wisely. **Vote for the CoD** because it is the party that has consistently called for **CHANGE** for the last 10 years.

The new CoD government will move quickly to achieve the following CHANGES:

- Act swiftly to expand and diversify the economy to create employment;
- Replace the rotten education system and build new schools and universities;
- Change the current health care system for a better one, and build new hospitals and clinics;
- Put government money in projects that benefit the nation, especially the poor;
- Strengthen parliament control over cabinet.

The CoD is the one unifying and progressive party in Namibia today and tomorrow. This is your party for the future. I therefore appeal to you to follow the CoD on our way to making Namibia a better place for all our people.

Vote CoD. Vote Ben Ulenga for President.  
I wish you all peaceful elections!  
Democratically Yours

Ben Ulenga

## 1. BUILDING A SECURE FUTURE FOR OUR YOUTH

Namibia is a country with a relatively youthful population. For various reasons, Namibians who are 60 years or older constitute less than 10% of our total population. About 40% of Namibians are younger than age 15 while women (53%) and youth make up the majority of our citizens.

Of an estimated population of about 2 million Namibians, only one million or so (i.e. including the school going population) make up the productive part of our population. Given the gift of our natural resources, it is possible to employ every abled bodied Namibian man or woman!

CoD believes that our collective future rests on ***doing it right*** by investing sufficient resources into the 70% of our population who are 35 years and younger. We must do this not for reasons of altruism but in celebration of the veritable role played by the past generations of Namibian youth in the epic struggles which have shaped our country's history and destiny. Our history records how young people rose to assume leadership positions and confronted head-on the challenges of the day during the dark reign of colonial subjugation and humiliation. Their actions and exploits are a courageous and proud chapter of our nation-making and building. It would, therefore, be tantamount to dereliction of duty and responsibility to allow the Nation's youth, its ***most precious*** resource to go to waste. In this respect, CoD is unequivocally convinced that **investing** in the youth of our country remains our ultimate **insurance policy**.

To mould today's youth to be tomorrow's leaders of our country is both an exhilarating challenge and a rewarding opportunity we all must embrace. We cannot afford to fail this responsibility. In laying a sound foundation for the youth we will render an invaluable service to the land of our forebears—the **Land of the Brave**. We in CoD are mindful too that Election 2009 represents a coming of age for the youth born at independence. These elections accord them the first opportunity to exercise their civic duty as voters. We thus congratulate them and urge them not to shirk this responsibility but to go out and be counted.

### **In realization of the above CoD, therefore, believes:**

- That government must remove all legal, financial, political, social or cultural obstacles in order to allow our country to profit from the energy, drive and exuberance of our country's youth.
- Twenty years after independence our institutions of higher learning are still trapped in the retrogressive *Verwoerdian* shibboleth which treats 18 years olds as perpetual minors.
- Therefore, consistent with Article 17 (2) of our country's constitution, which accords the right to vote to all Namibians from age 18 and to contest public office from age 21, all institutions of higher learning should remove the reactionary and patriarchal policies inherited at independence in order to allow young people to engage in political debate and contestation in order to crystallize for themselves the challenges of development facing our country and the world generally. In other words, we must allow free political action to our youth at school and University.

Universities after all, are a veritable crucible, for the youth to learn and unlearn if they are to be leaders of our country now and in the future.

To be sure, many of today's national leaders learnt the craft of politics at university and other institutions of higher learning defying the very Verwoerdian imprimatur government now so ironically enforces on our youth today. For this reason, Namibia remains a laggard in this regard compared even to the most autocratic and draconian regime of our region.

- That opportunities and funds be availed to release the inquisitive faculty and energy of our youth in order to participate not only in politics but in the full spectrum of human endeavour including music, arts, literature and sports, academia, science, entrepreneurship, etc.

## **2. Skills Development and Employment**

As a consequence of the colonial policies of expropriation, dispossession and exclusion, the majority of Namibians owns nothing but their bare labour. For the majority of Namibians their sole income is derived from the sweat of their brow. This is their sole livelihood. But today, more than 40% of our people are unemployed with many young and able bodied men congregation at traffic lights in urban centres to haggle as casual labour.

At the same time a growing number of our women are reduced to prostitution and entire families forced to scavenge for a livelihood at municipal dumps. The situation is no different in rural areas where small holder farmers eke out a living on marginal land. Their yields are ever shrinking and their livestock numbers dropping as a combined result of livestock rustling and the vicissitudes of climate and weather.

To compound all these, our country has recently suffered a regular combination of droughts and floods reducing many households to paupers who now depend on the charity and handouts from neighbours and others.

The current economic downturn has worsened the plight of tens of thousands of ordinary Namibian households. Despite this, our government remains unconcerned and aloof to the suffering of our citizens save as distributors of donor assistance to the plight of distressed citizens. As a fob to the country, the government announced a commission to study the impact of recession on our country and recommend measures to cushion individuals and businesses. This commission, it was announced, would report in April this year. However, as we have come to expect from this shambolic government, the report of the Geingob commission is collecting dust in the tried and tested tradition we have come to expect of this government since the days of President Nujoma.

When the commission was called into life, the Nation, rightly expected government intervention to minimize or avert job losses and loss of productive capacity in the economy. Sadly, this was not to be.

The country's labour unions, compromised as they are, have for their part forsaken the cause of the working poor and the unemployed. They have,

on the contrary, elected party political loyalty and prostrate themselves at the altar of political chieftains. For now, they put in cameo performances on government cocktail circuit bad-mouthing 'hibernators'. This is to be regretted.

That the high unemployment rate in our country is a function of this government's appalling records in education delivery is self-evident. The converse is also true, and that is that if we do not fix our education-delivery and quality the evils of poverty and joblessness will continue to haunt us.

### **To get our country to work, CoD:**

- ✚ Commits itself to redressing the 20 year damage by SWAPO in the area of **education delivery and skills training**. And while we are mindful of the multiple challenges facing our country, we will make education and skills training a priority amongst priorities when elected to office. To this end, our government will not only remove all hidden costs in education but also provide free education up to the basic degree level. In implementing this programme we do not need to re-invent the wheel but learn from how Botswana and others in our region, with fewer resources, succeed while our government continues to grope in the dark.
- ✚ Will roll out libraries to all schools and ensure each learner has textbooks on his/her desk.
- ✚ Will further ensure that teachers are properly trained and that all schools are provided with software and computers (which are the basic means of communication and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century).
- ✚ Will establish more technical, vocational and technology (ICT) centres to train youth for skills demanded by the knowledge economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Only leaders with no vision condemn their nations to second rate education. For CoD, only excellence and quality will be the defining criteria.

- ✚ Supports and calls for an immediate Summit on Job Creation promised, as sop, in the ruling party's 2004 Manifesto but which failed to see the light of day. This Summit must be attended by the broadest possible spectrum of social partners – i.e. labour unions, civil society as well as political actors.

### **3. Housing the Nation**

Namibians are ill-housed yet a roof over one's head is a **basic human need and right**. Those in the industry estimate Namibia's housing backlog at 60% of the entire adult population!

Homelessness is particularly most acute in the sprawling urban areas as our towns, settlements and villages are now enveloped by an ever-growing community of slum dwellers who live in unhygienic, unsafe and unserviced shacks.

Worst still, but for the half-hearted efforts of the National Housing Enterprise (NHE) government, municipalities and town councils have abandoned the lot of home seekers to the private sector and NGO's (such as the Shack Dwellers Association and Namibia Housing Action Group) who, for most part, operate with donor funds contrary to a clear obligation on the part of the local authorities to **establish a housing scheme** for the residents.

**A CoD government shall, therefore, develop a clear housing policy aimed at guiding the delivery of housing to the homeless of our cities, towns and rural villages. Sufficient funds shall be provided for the development of well-housed, sustainable communities. Our cities and towns need to be transformed into cohesive, safer and sustainable communities with easy access to work and social amenities.**

#### **4. Poverty and Welfare: Namibians are getting poorer**

The vast majority of **Namibians are poor**. By government's own admission 6% of Namibians are extremely poor and another 36% poor. This is a staggering 42% of Namibians. Given a corresponding rate of about 40% unemployment, this surely constitutes a **national crisis**. But then, this is the harvest of 20 years of mis-governance by the government the country is saddled with.

On this government's watch, our country now has the dubious distinction of being the most unequal country in the world. In other words, the outcome of this government's wrong-headed policies of the last two decades is a country where more and more wealth is owned by increasingly smaller elite. This is wrong. And we must work together to change this in the interest of the majority.

Increasingly, most Namibians are unable to make ends meet. The bulk of the toiling Namibian middle classes, the middle to lower civil servants and others, struggle under a mountain of debt. They work now simply to pay the usurious cash loan sharks and spend the little left on food only. This leaves no discretionary funds for children's extra-curriculum development, health care or family breaks.

As recession deepens and many lose their jobs and livelihood debt collectors, banks and auctioneers do a roaring business on the backs of the poor as houses, household effects, cars and other properties are repossessed. Given these difficult times, Namibians have emptied their piggy banks, are either cancelling their policies or are in arrears. Many more are already spending their nest egg today.

Further, the welfare schemes of the government presently exclude many indigent and marginalized of our citizens, mainly on account of them not having requisite national documents to proof their qualifications for these grants. These are the poor in many of our towns and slums, and in many of our rural areas including parts of Tsumkwe, Omaheke and Kunene.



For the destitute, this amounts to a double whammy as government is punishing these citizens for its failure to deliver a modicum of decent services to a mere 2 million citizens whilst our country is burdened by one of the largest civil services in Africa on a *per capita* basis.

Our health system is broken and needs a major overhaul. As our health infrastructure collapses owing to 20 years of neglect and low investment, an ever growing number of our children are now malnourished and stunted. Our citizens succumb to minor communicable diseases. Maternal mortality, infant mortality the percentage of teenage pregnancies, the incidence of TB cases and increase in drug resistant TB are all signs of a broken system. Malnutrition, AIDS pandemic TB and malaria rates are scandalous for a country blessed with the resources we are endowed with.

**CoD is committed to:**

- Reversing the decline in our health standards and system as our country can only prosper if we address human security. We shall embark on a major investment programmes in our health services and personnel.
- Prioritizing the issuance of National documents to all Namibians, particularly the marginalized and the indigent and work towards reaching 100% coverage for those entitled to old age pension. In fulfillment of the obligations of our constitution – but without attaching a specific figure on it now - we shall ensure that old age pension is a “liveable” amount. Further, we shall index the old age pension to inflation in order to ensure that the “basket” the aged receive is not eroded by inflation.
- Supporting Basic Income Grant (BIG) as an intermediate measure to address growing and direct poverty.
- Restructuring, in the long term, our economy to redress colonial expropriation and exploitation of our citizens through measures such as BEE as has been done elsewhere but which our government has failed to implement in the 20 years.

**Given the governments poor delivery in land reform, CoD will accelerate delivery in this critical by:**

- ✚ Speeding up the acquisition of farming land for redistribution to farmers, peasants and farm workers, who at present are landless or farm on marginal lands.
- ✚ Modernizing agricultural production in the communal areas, and bringing these into the mainstream agricultural economy. Achieving fairness, social justice and equity and correcting historical injustice.
- ✚ Intensively training and equipping new farmers for improved productivity and optimal land use.
- ✚ Providing unimpeded access to veterinary extension and financial support services.
- ✚ Removing the 'Red-line' from where it is situated at present and shifting it to our northern borders.
- ✚ Creating a permanent consultative network with farmers, farmers' organizations and cooperative.
- ✚ Realizing the immense agriculture potential in the Kunene, Kavango, Zambezi River areas, by introducing irrigation and other appropriate agro-schemes.
- ✚ Establishing appropriate international cooperation with successful countries with climatic conditions similar to Namibia's, such as the countries of the Middle East, in order to learn from their agriculture experience, with special emphasis on the usage of solar energy and natural gas for desalinization.
- ✚ Creating awareness that the shortage of water compounds the problems relating the land issue and, therefore, the provision of water must be part of the solution.
- ✚ Drawing lessons from Malawi's excellent example of empowering the small holder farmers by giving them free seeds and fertilizers to increase yields and food security for the vast number of our communal farmers as well as those on resettlement farms.

CoD cautions that productive farmland should under no circumstances be turned into informal settlements or squatter camps, as is the case at present.

## **5. Corruption and Poor Governance**

SWAPO has created a bloated bureaucracy which has, for the most part failed to deliver basic services to our people. Governance and accountability have all but collapsed at our municipalities, towns and villages. Rates and taxes have risen to levels affordable only by a privileged few. State Owned Enterprises (SOE's) have become havens of mismanagement and self enrichment. Government procurement process and award of licenses is riddled with corruption, kick backs and abuse of privileged information. In fact, the SWAPO government has "privatized" the government as an agency for the self enrichment by a chosen class made up of ministers, senior bureaucrats, relatives, bootlickers and their fellow travelers. A new parasitic class of "consultants" has recently walked out of the woodworks that feeds off and siphons a slice off contracts between the SWAPO government and donors. This phenomenon is nurtured and abetted by SWAPO. As Namibians we must rise to combat this scourge lest they consume us.

### **CoD is committed to:**

- A government which views public service as an honour to serve the people and not to rob them blind.
- Strengthening and up scaling the Anti Corruption Commission to bite and to ensure a clean and ethical government.
- Passing a Freedom of Information Act to enable citizens to access the process of decision making by government and other public bodies in the interest of transparency and fairness.
- Raising the cost of corruption as a deterrent for would be miscreants.

## **6. Valuing the Contribution of Women**

Women constitute the majority of our population. Despite some progress made since independence, society still does not fully value the contribution of our women. In our communities up and down the country women are victims of violence, rape and passion murders. Government has done little over the last 20 years to mainstream women's causes into the country's development agenda.

### **CoD is committed to:**

- Put a premium on women's contribution to society. This is the only way in which we can benefit from the contribution and ingenuity of more than half of our citizens.
- Working with NGO's and CBO's to remove all legal impediments raising barriers to equal participation by women.

**CoD believes that working together we can make our country a better place and bequeath this common wealth to our children. Come out in numbers to vote and be an agent of change!!**

**Vote for CoD!!**