



**ADDRESS BY HON. JOEL KAAPANDA,
MINISTER OF WORKS, TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS
AT A JOINT RA/RFA STAKEHOLDERS' DINNER, 21 FEBRUARY
2007, WINDHOEK**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Director of Ceremonies,
Minister of Finance;
Minister of Mines and Energy;
Minister of Trade and Industry;
Minister of Environment and Tourism;
Director General of the National Planning Commission;
Chairpersons of the RA and RFA and their Boards of Directors;
Deputy Minister of Finance;
Deputy Minister of Works, Transport and Communications;
Deputy Minister of Mines and Energy;
Chief Executive Officers of the Roads Authority and Roads Fund Administration;
Heads of Institutions;
Permanent Secretaries;
Inspector General of Police;
Senior Managers of the RA and RFA;
Ladies and Gentlemen

1. I am obliged to be here tonight and I thank the Chief Executive Officer of roads, Mr. Erastus Ikela for his kind invitation to me. This occasion heralds a significant milestone in building and consolidating relations between the public and decision-makers as well as State-Owned Enterprises and all stakeholders. I am particularly appreciative of the ongoing co-operation between the Roads Authority and the Roads Fund Administration. It is imperative that government institutions work together as much as possible to achieve common objectives in solving our nation's challenges. The fact that my colleague, the Minister of Finance and I are here is testimony to the government's commitment to a safe and efficient road sector.
2. The underlying objective of the establishment of the Roads Authority is that managing the nation's road network in an efficient and economic manner. It further felt necessary that the RA shoulder the additional responsibilities of

carrying out functions of motor vehicle registration and licencing, driver licencing and road transport inspection. A road network arise mainly from social and economic imperatives, and because they reflect the diversity of activities and geographies where people find themselves they are complex, varied and need to adapt and change as conditions change. A primary function of any road network is to move goods and people efficiently affordably, reliably and as safely as possible.

3. An efficient road network requires government, the private sector, parastatals, civil society and other different sectors of the economy to pool their resources, to meet the myriad transport challenges that enhance economic growth, job creation and sustainable growth. Road transportation has an important contribution to make in addressing the scourge of poverty in our country, creating wealth and providing the necessary linkages and opportunities, including facilitating improved access to public services for the rural masses. In this context, and as part of creating sustainable communities based on mixed land use and densities, it is critical that investment is focused in order to achieve sustainable growth and development.
4. When opening the first Cabinet meeting of the year, President Pohamba stated clearly and unequivocally, that every effort must be made in ensuring that road accidents are drastically reduced, if not eliminated altogether and that offenders are brought to book. This demonstrates the seriousness the government attaches to this problem. Taking the cue from the President, in January 2007, I convened a meeting with different stakeholders to trying to find solutions to these problems that we are facing. Out of that meeting, committees were formed to bring proposals on how to deal with the situation at hand.
5. During the last festive season alone, over 80 people died on our national roads. You will no doubt all agree that this is a highly unacceptable toll and that this state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue unabated because of the serious

ramifications that it has both on national development and the tourism sector. There must therefore be a more stricter and more vigorous enforcement of the road traffic rules and regulations. If need be, new traffic rules and regulations must be introduced in order to stem this unacceptable carnage on our national roads. These laws are put in place to improve safety and efficiency.

6. Our sole, overriding concern and emphasis should not be the punitive element of law enforcement, but rather the contribution that such laws and regulations make to improvements in social and economic efficiency of the transport systems itself. It is an horrifying fact that we are faced with so many fatalities resulting from accidents on our roads. These accidents are caused by various factors, from un-roadworthy vehicles, driver fatigue and unfitness, alcohol consumption and speeding. A lot of lives can be saved if all sectors in the road transport industry and other areas can fully collaborate in order to make telling contributions significantly to the safety and prosperity of all Namibians.
7. The Road Authority is paying increasingly greater attention to law enforcement in respect to overloading on our roads. Available statistics tell us that more crashes are caused by non-adherence to road traffic rules and regulations. We can tremendous improvements on road safety by introducing more stringent training regimes. For instance, the training of learner drivers can be incorporated into the school curriculum. I want to urge the RA to investigate this possibility and propose amendments to the current legislation so that we improve the training of our drivers.
8. Namibia is enjoying the fruits of hard work on the economy. We are in a robust period. This has led to increased road traffic. To date, Namibia has a population of more than 230 000 vehicles on the road. What this means is that the more vehicles we have, the more the increased demands are on a numerically stagnant enforcement community there is.

9. Enforcement affects every aspect of the industry. Overloading is controlled by the use of weighbridges. There is a need for improved training of officers in this area of enforcement and for commissioning more weigh-bridges, both portable and fixed. Another critical area of freight movement is of course dangerous or hazardous materials. Whilst other cargoes are transported by rail and are subjected to strict procedures, gaps have been identified in our road regulations. I again, urge the RA to investigate ways and means of closing loopholes in the current system.

10. This year, the RA will officially inaugurate the Outapi-Tsandi-Okahao Road and the Aus-Rosh Pinah Road, which have been constructed to high bitumen road standards. My Ministry is also looking forward to the commencement of a very large construction project being the upgrading of the Rundu-Elundu Road to a high standard bitumen road. This will mean that there will be a “tarred” road from Ruacana up to Katima Mulilo and further on to Ngoma. Furthermore, there are plans afoot to start the rehabilitation of the severely distressed road between Okahandja and Wilhelmstal by April 2007.

11. The maintenance of our road network continues to suffer tremendously due to inadequate funding. However I am proud to say that despite this major setback we have been able to keep the infrastructure reasonably intact with the minimal resources at our disposal. It suffices to make the point that road maintenance cannot succeed if it only supposed to be an RA or RFA matter. All of us: government, the private sector and the public, have a role to play. In this regard, I urge the RA and the RFA to work together to mobilise resources so as to make our road sector to rank amongst the safest, most effective, most efficient and most sustainable on the African continent, if not the world. This entails necessarily entails making the stakeholders to be aware of chronic shortages of funds, the need to curb overloading and the necessity of the mass distance charges and whatever other necessary means of revenue generation we might embark upon.

12. I have been informed that the RA and the RFA will embark upon a joint road show beginning next month to explain to the people exactly the kind of issues I am talking about. This is a commendable move and I want to encourage the people in the regions to come out in big numbers. The RA and RFA are public institutions and are there to serve you and your interests.

Thank you and good night!