

**KEYNOTE SPEECH BY PARAMOUNT CHIEF ADV. VEKUII**

**RUKORO,**

**AT THE OCCASION OF HIS INAUGURATION IN OKAHANDJA,**

**2 MAY 2015, NAMIBIA**

Your Worship, the Mayoress of Okahandja, Ms Valerie Aron;

Your Excellencies Kings, Queens, Captains, Chiefs, Traditional Leaders  
of various designations here present;

Leaders of our Traditional Flags;

Honourable Members of Parliament and Leaders of Political Parties;

Your Excellencies Members of the Diplomatic Corps here present;

Captains of Industry and other invited Distinguished Guests;

Members of the Press;

Ladies and Gentlemen –

Director of Ceremonies,

1. I feel deeply honoured and overwhelmed by the joy of seeing so many of you, from as far away as the Republics of Botswana and South Africa, and those who have flown in from the United States of America, all of whom have interrupted your daily schedules,

just to be with me and the Ovaherero Traditional Authority for this historic event.

I sincerely do appreciate your presence here, which shall leave an indelible memory in me, and I hope that we shall have a wonderful celebration together.

Honourable Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen!

2. We are here mainly to celebrate my Appointment and Inauguration as the next Paramount Chief of the Ovaherero People, which took place towards the end of 2014, and for which a celebratory event, the like of this one, has never been organized.
3. I hope that for those of you who have not been able to witness the whole process of how it is done and by whom, the **verbal explanation that you have heard** OR the few things that you so far have seen today, will have given you a bit of a feel of how an Ovaherero Paramount Chief is chosen or celebrated.
4. I am sure that today many ears and eyes are set upon me with great expectation or reasonable curiosity to hear what I would say at this occasion, and in that context I shall try my level best to point out to some of the things that I intend doing as the

Paramount Chief of the Ovaherero People in Namibia and in the Diaspora.

5. The Ovaherero People and I have not declared any war against them and nor against our Government; in fact, and on the contrary, I want to do things that are of mutual interest and benefit to our Government, People and Country in a spirit of partnership. Developmental issues, **be they national or in a particular traditional area**, cannot be done by Government or a Traditional Authority alone as they both –in my opinion – begs for a mutual and complementary synergy. The Government should take it from me that we shall regard it as a **friend, with a common cause and purpose**, and not our enemy but also as one that we would like to do business with.

Director of Ceremonies!

6. The new Minister of Urban & Rural Development has just pronounced herself on our application for recognition with exceptional haste and efficiency. She said she endorses her predecessor's position that the Ovaherero Traditional Authority can only be recognized within the confines of the Aminuis Reserve. The so-called "choice" of Aminuis that is alleged to have been made by the late Paramount Chief Riruako, was merely for ADMINISTRATIVE purposes and was NEVER meant as a so-called "AREA OF JURISDICTION" of the OTA! Moreover, the law that the

Minister is supposed to administer provides clearly that the authority of Chiefs is NOT TERRITORIALY OR GEOGRAPHICALLY based but it is rather based on their SUBJECTS IRRESPECTIVE of LOCALITY!!! To conclude otherwise is to implement ethnically-based Bantustans in an independent Namibia in violation of our Constitution! Worst of all, it is being imposed on the very people – the Ovaherero of Hosea Kutako, who was the FIRST traditional leader to stand up and REJECT Bantustans during the colonial era while others accepted it! The Government must come clean on the hidden agenda they have against my People, but Aminuis Bantustans we shall not accept – not today, not tomorrow, and not EVER!

7. The allegation that ‘Advocate Rukoro wants to expand his jurisdiction to other Regions’ is therefore not true. In my application for recognition, I have stated the Geographical or Political or Statutory Regions of Namibia in which I have followers, namely: Otjozondjupa, Omaheke, Erongo and Kunene and of which, even as I am speaking to you now, the Traditional Representatives are sitting here amongst us. They are not **all-of-them** domiciled in the Aminuis Constituency of the Omaheke Region. In fact, I even forgot to mention the Vaalgras Constituency in the Karas Region and in towns and

cities where the OTA also has followers who regard themselves as bona fide Ovaherero whose ancestors were merely displaced by Von Trotha's War of Extermination.

Who will deny the fact that Chief Kahikopo and his traditional community **hail from and are domiciled in Otjimbingue/Otjivingue in the Erongo Region, and not in Aminuis?** And by the same token, who will deny the fact that the following Chiefs: Kavari, Kapuuo, Kavei, Tjivau, Tjipene Keja, Hamburee, Tjingaete, (to name but a few) and their traditional communities hail from and are domiciled in the Kunene, Otjozondjupa, Erongo and Omaheke Regions of Namibia respectively, and not in Aminuis?

All these Traditional Leaders and their traditional community members are **residents of these Regions by birth**; they did not emigrate to these Regions from Aminuis at any given time and since I was appointed I have never transported these followers of mine to these other Regions. They were there already. So, how can it be alleged that 'Rukoro wants to expand his jurisdiction to other Regions? I regard that as an unfortunate remark and devoid of any truth.

It is the Traditional Leaders from these Regions who have appointed me at Ehungiro to be their Paramount Chief **and it is this fact** that I have stated in my application for recognition. That goes to say that I did not expand the area of my jurisdiction to other Regions and I

therefore categorically reject it. The sooner the Senior Leaders of our Government intervene and ensure that the line Minister act in conformity with the strict dictates of the law and without discriminating between the OTA and the other Authorities in the application of the very same law, instead of resorting to politically motivated illegal interpretations which in the end will only serve to embarrass Government, the better for the Nation.

8. I have chosen OKAHANDJA for my Administrative Office and for this event for the following reasons:-

For its **centrality** and **equidistance** to all the Regions where I have followers, as mentioned earlier above; historically it has been the Capital/Administrative Centre of the Ovaherero People; it is where almost all the Ovaherero and Ovambanderu Paramount Chiefs are buried and where their followers annually come to remember them and to commemorate their heroism; Okahandja to the Ovaherero and Ovambanderu is like what WINDHOEK is to the Namibian People, LONDON is to the English, BERLIN is to the Germans, MOSCOW is to the Russians, PARIS is to the French or WASHINGTON D. C. is to the Americans and JERUSALEM is to the Jews and the Arabs.

We do not only have a **historical** but also a **cultural** and **spiritual** connectivity to OKAHANDJA. Okahandja Ongumbiro Jovaherero!

Okahandja is the Central Heroes Acre of the Ovaherero and Ovambanderu; Okahandja is where the SPIRIT of the Ovaherero and Ovambanderu resides!

I realized all these when I chose Okahandja as the Ovaherero Traditional Authority's Administrative Centre and I will not relent on this because changing my administrative centre from Aminuis to another place, still within the boundaries of Namibia, is nothing new because it has happened all over the world and, as such, I am not re-inventing the wheel.

In Namibia the former capital city of the Oshikoto Region was TSUMEB but was changed to OMUTHIYA; the former capital of Nigeria was LAGOS but changed to ABUJA; in Germany BONN was changed to BERLIN; in Israel TEL AVIV to JERUSALEM; in Brazil, RIO DE JANEIRO to BRASILIA, etc. All these cities did not only change in names, but also in distances of hundreds and thousands of kilometres from the original sites. So, what is wrong about me and the Ovaherero stating in our application where we would like to operate from: namely Okahandja? Do our Government and I have to spend/waste money over this issue and battle it out in the courts only because some self-misguided anti-Rukoroists want to restrict the OTA to Aminuis? Until when will our Government listen to this type of anti-Ovaherero propaganda? We say anti-Ovaherero because the views of less than a 5% minority cannot forever be used to

oppress and suppress the rights of more than 95% of the people! Our Government must get out of the bedrooms of minority tribal groups who are busy sowing seeds of discontent in the knowledge that “big brother” is behind them. If GRN is unwilling to address this uncalled for provocation and injustice, the time will surely comewhen the ancestors of the oppressed will hear our pleas!

Director of Ceremonies, on another issue -

9. Let me declare here **in public** that I was duly appointed by the majority of the Ovaherero Traditional Leaders Representatives at Ehungiro to represent the interests of ALL THE OVAHERERO PEOPLE throughout the whole world and not just my supporters. And I shall do so in much the same way our Government is a Government of ALL THE NAMIBIAN PEOPLE and not just **of** and nor **for** the members of the SWAPO Ruling Party.
10. The Ovaherero people are **ONE** and **INDIVISIBLE** and in my Paramountcy there shall be no dichotomy between my Hereros **as if distinct** from those other Hereros.
11. To the Ovaherero People in the Diaspora let me repeat it to you: the Ovaherero People are **ONE** and **INDIVISIBLE** and I am here to represent all of them, regardless of where they are on earth.



**12.** And in that regard, I shall vigorously pursue the effort of our late Paramount Chief, Dr Kuaima Riruako, who told some of us before he passed on that he would discuss with the local leaders in the Diaspora and their respective governments, together with the Nama Leadership, the idea of having the Otjiherero and Nama languages, also recognized as legitimate languages of the Herero and Nama citizens of these countries, and with a view to having them taught in their schools.

This was out of the realization that the German colonialism in this country also committed a “Cultural Genocide” against some of our people in some parts of Botswana and in South Africa.

I realized this when I attended the cultural gathering at Omauaneno near Tsabong in Western Botswana in September, 2014 when I had a wish to say something in Otjiherero to my people but could not, as they all would not understand. What a painful experience!

I was deeply touched and greatly encouraged by His Excellency, President Ian Khama Tseretse Khama of the Republic of Botswana when he said at the same gathering that his government would do everything in its power to assist our people there to develop their culture. I hope that the German Government will assist by funding this venture for the sake of our people in the Diaspora to learn these two languages so that they can regain their lost culture.

Director of Ceremonies –

**13.** In my earlier statements I have said that our late Paramount Chief Riruako has left us with a lot of “unfinished business” and that I was prepared to carry on where he stopped. In this regard, one of the issues that were so dear to his heart that he left ‘unfinished’ was the issue of the **Ovaherero** (in the generic sense) and the **Nama Genocide and Reparation**.

I shall continue with this issue with **first and foremost** our own Government and see if we could reach a **reasonable mutualaccommodation** on this highly emotive issue.

I shall also knock at the door of the German Government **directly** or through any of its designated **proxy** here in its Embassy in Windhoek to seek a **mutually acceptable and reasonable accommodation**.

Whilst on this issue of Genocide and Reparation, I want to be on record that the Ovaherero, Ovambanderu and the Nama Descendants, that we refer to as “Diasporans”, have a legitimate and automatic right to be part of any discussion on this issue because, had it not been for the Extermination Orders of General von Trotha, which led to their forebears to flee to Botswana and South Africa, they would not have been born there. This fact must be recognized by both our Government and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany.

This will not be the first time this will happen. It had happened before when the Governments of **Germany** and **Israel** allowed a **non-sovereign Jewish Representation** to participate in the Brussels Reparations Agreements for the Jewish Holocaust in 1952. Other similar tripartite negotiations in the world abound, but the one referred to above should suffice to prove my point of inclusivity for our Diasporans and ourselves as leaders of the affected communities. To us it is a non-negotiable matter of principle that “it cannot be about us but without us”!

Director of Ceremonies,

**14.** The other day Pope Francis came out strongly in support of the Armenian People by referring to their ordeal at the hands of Turkey as the “first Genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century”. Whilst he was of course correct to call their plight genocide he most certainly was wrong in calling it the “first Genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century”. As we all know very well, the first genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> century took place on African soil, right here in Namibia, committed against us – the Ovaherero and Namas during the 1904 – 1908 War of Extermination waged by the Forces of Imperial Germany with intent to wipe us from the face of the earth.

We call upon the representatives of our Catholic Church here in Namibia to kindly and urgently advise the Vatican of this grave and material misstatement of historical fact, as well as to equally solicit

the support of the Vatican in similarly declaring what happened to our ancestors during 1904 -1908 as Genocide and a crime against humanity.

I continue to call upon the German authorities to stop practicing selective and double morality. They cannot accept that what happened to the Armenian people constitute genocide, but that what they did to the Ovaherero and Namas is NOT genocide – presumably because the one event took place on European soil and the other on African soil! That is naked international racism which is unacceptable in this modern day and age and which, in and by itself, constitutes yet another crime against humanity!

We, therefore, demand an unqualified APOLOGY from the highest political offices in BERLIN for the crime of GENOCIDE committed against our People – this is long overdue; we demand it NOW and before 2 October 2015 when Von Trotha's Extermination Order will be 111 years old!

We equally demand an acknowledgement IN PRINCIPLE by the German Government – NOW and before 2 October 2015, that they are amenable to pay the two affected communities compensation for the GENOCIDE committed against our ancestors pursuant to the officially decreed Extermination Orders – details and modalities can be the subject matter of trilateral discussions involving us, our Government and the German Government.

If these modest and reasonable demands cannot be entertained, Germany and others must take full responsibility for the way in which the current and future generations of our people are going to assert their rights. Our claims will not go away; they will not expire; if anything, because of your intransigence they will become more expensive for your children, and German-Namibian Relations will be redefined forever!

Director of Ceremonies!

**15.** I have so many other things that are way up on my priority list that I shall not be able to enumerate them all in my statement today, like the issues of education, health, abject poverty and neglect of my people in their traditional areas and without adequate or totally no infra-structures worthy of any meaningful appreciation and so on-and-on.

However, one of them needs mention.

**16.** This is about my vision and unwavering intention to restore the dignity and pride of the Ovaherero People wherever they are, by setting ourselves the objective of becoming the Jews of Namibia in the key areas of the Economy, Technology, Education and Training.

I want us to do so by focussing on empowering ourselves economically and financially by relying on our own efforts and

resources as a people in the first place. This we can and shall do by establishing an ALL-OVAHERERO DEVELOPMENT FUND, which will have clearly defined aims and objectives and which will be subjected to the principles of modern-day accounting and auditing.

Preliminary and very conservative indications suggest that modest voluntary monthly contributions by only 2,000 of our young employed supporters will yield no less than N\$5,000,000 per year by the end of next year for such a Fund! This does not include sales of donated livestock per year from our farmers or donations from well-meaning business personalities, NGO's and Nations who support our cause.

The German War of 1904 –1908 not only destroyed 80% of our population, it also resulted in all our wealth of land and livestock being expropriated without compensation; our culture, way of life and psyche being destroyed for a whole century. But this leadership is determined to start laying the foundations for future Ovaherero generations to reassert their pride and to become and be known as the Jews of Namibia.

- Samuel Maharero's strategic retreat into Botswana ensured that Von Trotha's Extermination Order did not succeed;

- Hosea Kutako, apart from the many roles he played during and immediately after the German War, internationalised the Namibian struggle which led to our independence;
- Clemence Kapuuo played a key role in planting the initial seeds of national reconciliation during a very difficult period in the history of our country;
- Kuaima Riruako will forever be remembered for spearheading the Genocide Movement and Reparations Claims against the German Government. In this context, the nation will never forget the return of the human skulls from Germany in 2011 as well as the return of the Botswana Ovaherero and Ovambanderu with their Cattle – descendants of those who fled Von Trotha's War;

It is now your and my turn to make history by committing ourselves to the economic empowerment and emancipation of the Ovaherero and Ovambanderu during our lifetime!

Yes, we can!!!

Yes, we shall overcome!!!

I thank You All!