

**ADDRESS BY HIS LORDSHIP PETER S. SHIVUTE,
CHIEF JUSTICE OF NAMIBIA, AT THE
INAUGURATION OF THE NEW KATIMA MULILO
MAGISTRATE'S COURT,
KATIMA MULILO, 17 SEPTEMBER 2024**

(Salutations)

1. It is a great honour and privilege to stand before you on this most auspicious occasion marking the official inauguration of the newly constructed Katima Mulilo Magistrate's Court. Today, we celebrate the realisation of an important step in advancing the rule of law, ensuring that justice remains accessible and closer to all members of society, and enhancing the operational capacity of our courts.
2. This event signifies more than just the opening of a newly constructed building. It represents our steadfast commitment to the mission of the

judiciary: *“To uphold the Constitution by promoting the rule of law through the administration of justice that is fair, timely, accountable, and accessible to all”*. For justice to be effectively administered, proper infrastructure plays an indispensable role. A well-equipped court is a vital instrument in ensuring that justice reaches every corner of our society, and that the rights of all individuals are protected and upheld.

3. The construction work that has transformed this court represents a significant step in fulfilling that mission. Allow me to outline some of the key features of this new and much improved facility, designed to provide an optimal environment for the administration of justice and those who work under it.

4. First and foremost, increased security has been prioritised in the construction process. The safety and protection of judicial officers, staff members, and the public are of utmost importance. We recognise that the court is a place where sensitive and often difficult matters are adjudicated. Ensuring that everyone who enters this space – whether to work or to seek justice – can do so without fear is essential for the effective functioning of any legal system. Enhanced security measures will contribute to a sense of safety and trust, which is fundamental to the proper operation of this court.
5. In addition, this split-new building has been designed with the needs of vulnerable witnesses in mind, particularly children and adults who may find the court environment intimidating. The creation of private and secure waiting areas, demonstrates our commitment to safeguarding the dignity of

vulnerable individuals. These areas provide a calm and private space, ensuring that witnesses can participate in the judicial process without added stress or anxiety. Moreover, the installation of one-way viewing glass in the vulnerable witness testifying room is a notable innovation. It allows witnesses to testify without direct visual contact with the accused, providing an additional layer of protection that encourages full and truthful testimony while minimising the emotional toll on those most at risk.

6. Ladies and gentlemen, the redesigning of this court is not merely a matter of structural improvements; it reflects the broader values that underpin our judiciary. This building, like all public institutions, belongs to the people it serves. It stands as a symbol of our collective duty to uphold justice and fairness in our society. As such, I encourage all judicial

officers, court staff, and members of the public to take pride in this new facility. Today, we see the dawn of a new chapter – a chapter in which this court stands as a beacon of justice, fully functional and ready to serve the community.

7. To our judicial officers and court staff, including prosecutors, legal aid counsel, police officers, clerks of court, interpreters, maintenance officers as well as investigators I offer my deepest thanks and admiration for the work you have done, and continue to do, in the service of justice. Without your diligence, dedication, and expertise, this building would be nothing more than bricks and mortar. The real value of this court lies in the work you perform every day, and I encourage you to continue striving for excellence in the discharge of your duties. Let this new space inspire you to reach

even greater heights as you deliver justice to those who seek it.

8. To the members of the public, I say this: this court exist for you. It is here to ensure that your rights are protected, your grievances heard, and your disputes resolved in accordance with the law. It is important that the citizenry takes full advantage of the judicial system, understanding that the courts are for the people and of the people. This new court is a testament to our continued effort to bring justice closer to the communities it serves. Use it, respect it, and trust that it is here to serve your needs.
9. In conclusion, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all those who have worked tirelessly to make the construction of this court possible. The construction of this facility has been a collaborative effort, involving the government represented by the

Ministry of Justice, the judiciary and private contractors. Your efforts have not only breathed new life into the town of Katima Mulilo by endowing it with a valuable facility, but have also reaffirmed our shared commitment to the rule of law and access to justice. Together, we will continue to build a judiciary that serves the people with integrity, fairness, and dedication.

I thank you.