

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY
HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBA, PRESIDENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE
LAUNCHING OF NAMPOST SMARTCARD AND SMART SWITCH
NAMIBIA**

28 FEBRUARY 2006

WINDHOEK

****Check Against Delivery***

**Director of Ceremonies
Honourable Ministers
Honourable Members of Parliament
Honourable Governor of Khomas Region
Your Worship the Mayor of Windhoek
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Distinguished Captains of Industry
Distinguished Invited Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We live in a rapidly changing world, where technology has become an ever-present element in the provision of services across all sectors of the economy and social life. This evening we have seen and heard how an initiative by Namibia Post Ltd and Net 1 Universal Electronic Payment System will bring electronic banking services to more Namibians.

I am delighted to be here this evening to witness the launching of Smart Switch Namibia, a joint Venture between NamPost and Net 1, as well as the unveiling of the NamPost Smart Card services. In my view, these two events are significant in a number of ways. Firstly, the joint venture demonstrates that our efforts to promote public private partnerships are bearing fruit.

Some years ago, the Government took deliberate efforts to commercialize some services that were strictly in the public domain, including the provision of postal services, which became NamPost. In subsequent years, NamPost has proven to be a forward-looking entity, dedicated to the provision of services to our people in all parts of the country. New post offices have been built in towns, villages and settlements. This wide national footprint of post offices provide valuable services to thousands of citizens who do not have access to modern banking services and other services such as money transfers.

Our efforts to promote and encourage public private partnerships are based on the belief that private sector firms and state-owned enterprises can create mutually beneficial synergies that promote efficiency, profitability and facilitate the application of new technologies. As we have seen here this evening, NamPost and Net 1 have done just that. Through Smart Switch Namibia, more people are going to gain access to modern and fast banking services that are secure, affordable and user-friendly.

This is a demonstration that technology should not be feared, that it should not introduce complicated systems that are difficult to use. Rather, it should solve the people's "everyday" problems by being simple to use and by providing solutions to the problems that people face in their daily lives. We live in a changing world where banking services have become a reality in the lives of most Namibians. From the youth to

the elderly, all of us engage in financial transactions as part of modern living. The availability of safe and efficient banking services that have been introduced by Smart Switch Namibia will, therefore, go a long way to complement the existing services and thereby ensure that all our people, who need banking services have access them.

It should also be noted that the availability of these services compliments Governments efforts to improve the standard of living of our citizens, particularly in the rural areas. Another positive aspect is that this new infrastructure can facilitate the provision of social services such as the distribution of old age pensions, subvention for war veterans and other social grants.

I believe that the newly-introduced electronic payment system will also boost economic activities by making it possible for traders and suppliers of goods and services to effect financial transactions in secure and efficient manner. It is my hope that ways will be found to create interfaces between this system and those used by our commercial banks. In this manner, economic activities can be facilitated countrywide by creating a countrywide electronic payment system.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate NamPost and Net 1 Universal Electronic Payment Systems for their vision and hard-work that has led to the creation of the Smart Switch Namibia joint venture. The joint venture represents another success story in our efforts to attract investments, encourage the transfer of appropriate technology and promote economic growth. Such success stories serve as an encouragement for us to continue with our concerted efforts to promote economic growth by positioning our country as an attractive destination for investors. We will also intensify our efforts to facilitate the growth of the small and medium enterprises sector as part of our strategy to address the problem of unemployment.

We believe that this sector has the potential to create a large number of employment opportunities.

Director of Ceremonies,

I am informed that the new smart card technology has outstanding security features that prevent fraudulent transactions on a customer's account. Such strong features are commendable because they will help to safeguard the savings and incomes of the customers. As you all know, the majority of the customers who bank with NamPost include the lower income groups such as the elderly, hawkers and self employed citizens, most of whom live in rural areas.

The new technology will indeed go a long way in providing more Namibians with banking services, especially in areas where these services were not always available in the past. I urge Smart Switch

Namibia, to become a service provider of excellence, with a deliberate focus on customer satisfaction in all parts of the country.

Moreover, the availability of technology should be accompanied by a human touch of helpfulness and patience so that customers, particularly our pensioners, can learn to use their new smart cards at a reasonable pace. In my view, customer service should become the yardstick for you to measure the success of this new venture.

I also believe that some useful lessons can be learnt from this venture. The first lesson is that through hard work we can achieve our goals and realize our dreams. Secondly, we should be innovative in our approach both in the public and private sectors, to identify the areas in which new technologies can be applied to deliver services more effectively. Thirdly, we should learn that it is possible to provide modern services, even to areas that have been considered as too remote to reach in the past. As we march towards Vision 2030, we must do our utmost best to ensure that all our citizens are part and parcel of this process of change and progress.

To joint venture partners in Smart Switch Namibia, I wish to say job-well done and congratulations.

With these words, I now have the pleasure to declare the NamPost Smart Card and Smart Switch Namibia officially launched.

I thank you.