

WINDHOEK HEBREW CONGREGATION

PO Box 563, WINDHOEK, Namibia



NAMIBIA

THE POLITICAL SITUATION

Namibia's Constitution provides for a constitutional democracy with elections every five years for a President and members of the House of Assembly and National Council, protection of human rights, the rule of law, freedom of speech, a mixed economy, etc.

THE GOVERNMENT

There are 23 Ministries in a Parliament of 78, so the Executive forms a rather high proportion of the Legislature. The Judiciary has shown its independence consistently, despite being criticised for its objective decisions which sometimes are contrary to government policy. The National Assembly comprises 20 members and receives all legislation approved by the House of Assembly for review and recommendations.

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

Namibia has the highest Gini co-efficient which means the greatest difference between the number of wealthy and the far greater number less fortunate inhabitants. This has given rise to the need for political intervention aimed at re-distribution of wealth. The namibianisation of the economy is also undergoing strong political support.

For those who have the means, life in Namibia can be very pleasant and enjoyable as there are many amenities catering to all tastes and depth of pockets. Windhoek is the capital with a population of about 300 000 people living under fairly modern conditions as regards schooling, health services, shopping, banking, sport and other recreational amenities. There is a tremendous skills shortage, aggravated by the failure of the education system. The unemployment figure is unacceptably high and growing from year to year.

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THE ECO-POLITICAL SITUATION

Affirmative Action legislation enacted in 1999 has been fairly successfully implemented, but has aroused feelings of reverse discrimination resulting in young whites inclined to seek their future elsewhere. BEE legislation is still pending, but is nevertheless actively pursued by the government, regional councils, municipalities, parastatals and the big mining companies. Considerable and growing attention and support are being given to Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) at all levels – public and private – as a means of growing the economy, creating jobs and ameliorating poverty.

THE MICRO ECONOMY

Mining is the mainstay of the economy (diamonds, uranium, etc.) and the largest contributor to the Treasury. Uranium mining is growing fast, two mines are in production and several others will be in production in a year or two which will make Namibia one of the biggest Uranium producers in the world. We now have several diamond cutting and polishing factories of which seven are Israeli/Jewish owned. The supply to local factories of the outstanding quality of Namibian diamonds attracted investment in such factories. Beneficiation of minerals is being encouraged by government.

Tourism is well-established and has a promising future, but the current economic conditions overseas have dulled it temporarily. The financial services, banking, wholesale and retail sectors are modern, well represented and flourishing. Industrialisation is proceeding at a slow but steady pace – mostly food processing.

THE MACRO ECONOMY

We are members of the SACU and whereas in the past the receipts from this source represented nearly 40% of our yearly budget, it has now shrunk to about half, and so the government is forced to find new sources of income and we have already had a foretaste of more taxes, mostly affecting the mining industry and property transactions. We are still members of the Rand Monetary Area (RMA), the Namibia Dollar is on a par with the SA Rand and the Bank of Namibia holds growing reserves as the balance of trade is positive.

Our government supports the free enterprise system and attempts to establish an environment conducive to investment and economic growth. Regrettably, however, the rigid labour legislation favours the trade unions – strong allies of SWAPO even before Independence. The average GDP growth achieved since Independence is about

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4% and falls far short of what is required to alleviate the serious unemployment problem still less achieve the goal of Vision 2030 which aims at a standard of living equal to that of the developed world for all Namibian citizens.

We have since Independence enjoyed a reasonable degree of political, social and economic stability. We enjoy a peaceful environment. Regrettably, crime has increased somewhat in recent months. We enjoy a modern infrastructure as regards telecommunicatons, power, roads, etc. The economic infrastructure, banking, financial services, etc. are also modern by South African standards.

THE IMPACT OF THE WORLD FINANCIAL ECONOMIC CRISIS ON NAMIBIA

This affected Namibia quite considerably in that its economy is export-driven – over 70% of what it produces it exports and depends on the proceeds to pay for its imports, again over 70%. The severe effects on the diamond industry and mining in general have abated and they are now again showing growth. The favourable price of Uranium has dropped by about 20% following the impact of the Japanese catastrophe. Copper mining has recovered, thanks to the high commodity price. Tourism is suffering in consequence of the financial crisis in Europe and the USA.

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

We are a very small community of about six proper Jewish families and about another five or more intermarried families. Cheder classes for two children are provided by Mr Zvi Gorelick, the Synagogue Officiant.

Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft has over the many years endeared himself by his regular visits and officiated at the funeral of Julius Pupkewitz on 19 December 2010.

We are affiliated to the SAJBD and Beth Din in Johannesburg. We need their support and would appreciate prominent speakers visiting South Africa also being channeled here.

We have a few Israeli families living here and a number of Israeli men working in their respective diamond cutting and polishing factories who go to Israel on the various festivals. Sometimes, their families visit them here. Unlike last year, when the Israelis habitually came to Shul on Friday evenings, it has not been so this year. We intend investigating how we can restore the position so that we have a minyan on Friday evenings. Mr Zvi Gorelick conducts the Friday evening and Sabbath morning services.

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The High Festivals have been reasonably well attended and Chabad deserve our heartfelt thanks for sending us regularly young qualified or student Rabbis to conduct the services. We observed Tu B'Shvat, Yom Ha'atzmaut, Tisha B'Av and had a successful Lag B'Omer picnic.

Since many years the widows of past members have received financial aid in all cases of need, even those living in the RSA.

The death of Julius Pupkewitz has again reduced our small numbers of old established members. The regular Committee meetings are held under the Chairmanship of Mr Lawrence Pieters, the current President. We are organising ourselves to change the Constitution so that in case of need the assets may be administered with the aid of the SAJBD, but personally I believe it may not be necessary as a very stout effort will be made to integrate the Israeli community into our old established one without losing control.

The book on The Jews of SWA/Namibia, started many years ago, is still unfinished, but good progress has been made thanks to Perri Caplan and to bring the matter to finality, we negotiated the help of Mr David Sacks of the SAJBD in Johannesburg and there is, therefore, reasonable hope it will be ready for publication towards the end of this year.

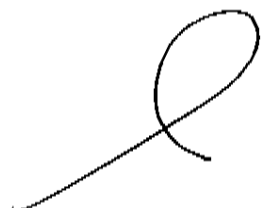
We look forward to Jews, especially from South Africa, settling here under the stable and peaceful conditions, pragmatic country governance and attractive economic opportunities in many sectors of the economy that characterise Namibia. Life in Namibia with its friendly people can be very attractive for persons who enjoy outdoor life, the well-known scenic beauty of the country, the coastal holiday resorts, angling, etc. Sadly, this has so far not happened, but thanks to the establishment of diamond cutting and polishing factories we have some 20 – 30 Israelis living here, some with their families.

ISRAEL-NAMIBIA RELATIONS

Diplomatic Situation:

Following the 1997 Oslo agreement Namibia recognised Israel. The new Israeli Ambassador, Dan Shaham, received his credentials a few days ago and we hope he will follow in the footsteps of his predecessor, Ilan Baruch, who created a positive relationship with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture and

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the Ministry of Trade & Industry. He also accomplished much by his frequent visits to establish a useful relationship between the two governments. The new Ambassador has yet to visit us and we hope he will be able to continue the good work.

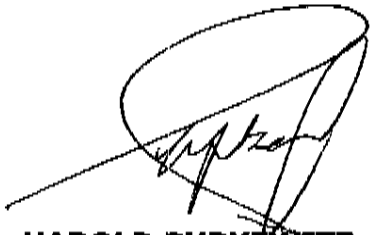
Pupkewitz Holdings (Pty) Ltd has been instrumental in promoting the business interests of various prominent Israeli companies engaged in supplying products and services to serve the requirements of the Ministry of Defence, Namibia Police and National Intelligence, Sat-Com, MTC, Leo, Telecom Namibia, Africa Online and ITN Group.

As reported in previous years, there are seven thriving Israeli diamond cutting and polishing companies. Israeli-owned Purity Manganese has achieved great success in increasing production and is poised to develop furthermore. Gal Sirton, with the aid of a Pupkewitz Group subsidiary, is establishing a business serving the irrigation farming community.

In recent months we enjoyed the visits of several tourist groups who in all cases also expressed their entire satisfaction.

My concluding words are :

We aim to carry on the traditions of the past as an orthodox community and trust Dame Fortune will smile on us.



**HAROLD PUPKEWITZ
HONORARY LIFE PRESIDENT –
WINDHOEK HEBREW CONGREGATION**

10-08-2011
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