



**STATEMENT BY H.W. THE MAYOR, ALDERMAN IMMANUEL
WILFRIED, AT THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
25 JUNE 2019, 18:00
CIVIC CENTRE, WALVIS BAY**

FELLOW COUNCILLORS

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, MANAGEMENT AND OFFICIALS

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE MEDIA

As usual, I have the opportunity and privilege to address the Council and the public on a number of issues and events which I consider worth mentioning or emphasising.

The first half of 2019 has now been confined to history but a lot remains to be achieved during the rest of the year. From a local authority point of view we need to promptly complete projects that have been rolled over while our new projects also need to be implemented at the earliest possible time.

This would be part of our contribution to help stimulate and revive both the local and national economy by awarding various contracts to our own people, meaning Namibians.

After another quarter has seen the contraction of the Namibian economy, experts are repeating the message that we as Namibians are the only ones that can ensure a smooth passage out of this tight spot. It is often said we should start thinking outside the box. Some are of the opinion there should be no box to begin with otherwise you may just be boxed in for life, and cannot move. The figure of speech aside, the real question is: Are we creative enough in our thinking to effect positive change?

I believe we have enough skills at our disposal to do exactly that. As a nation, we should also be brave enough to confront and remove those obstacles that block our progress. For example, we have seen that traditional ways of thinking are not assisting our brothers and sisters in the informal economy.

Economic empowerment in their case should mean they are able to move beyond daily survival and apply greater control over their resources and life choices. There are hardly any micro-finance programmes that can provide them with the tools to increase their decision-making power and level of income. It is time for us to achieve real pro-poor growth instead of just conversing about it.

Some recent sporting events have shone the spotlight firmly on Walvis Bay and illustrated how such successful events can be of benefit to the city and residents. Thousands of people streamed into Walvis Bay to participate in or attend the NALASRA (*Namibian Local Authorities Sport and Recreation Association*) Games and the NAPSO (*Namibian Private Schools Organisation*) Winter Sport Event. My appeal to both the private and public sectors is to continue marketing Walvis Bay in a way that will attract these types of events.

There is also a growing trend among Namibian organisations and corporate entities that prefer to host their meetings and events in Walvis Bay. We thus need to ensure that the infrastructure is improved to accommodate those groups. Provided their experience here has been positive and enjoyable, they are guaranteed to return for more.

While we are in the middle of winter, despite the spells of east weather in between, it is often the time for us to be concerned about the outbreak of fires. The most vulnerable residents are those who live in shacks. Even though we have come a long way in enlarging the permanent contingent of fire fighters to improve our fire-fighting capabilities, the root of the problem remains, namely over congestion of informal structures. However, if people follow basic safety rules, the risk of fires can be minimised.

Shacks are normally built with easily combustible materials like cardboard, plastics, wood, and so on. Electricity is usually obtained from one point from the main dwelling and is normally overloaded due to the demand from the

shacks. An overloaded cable can get hot and will spontaneously burn on its own and create a fire inside a shack. This, by the way, is one of the most common causes of shack fires.

Due to the overcrowding and close proximity of shacks to one another, it is almost impossible for a fire to be confined only to one or two shacks. This makes it possible for the fire to spread very rapidly through a number of shacks within a short period of time.

The long term solution obviously is to have as many people as possible housed in units that are decent and dignified. Fortunately, housing has become one of our country's main priorities and Walvis Bay is one of the front runners when it comes to the provision of housing, or serviced land for that matter.

In the meantime, however, we need to make sure that when fires break out they are contained and put out as swiftly as possible. The Municipality of Walvis Bay is in the process of planning a new satellite fire station in the Tataleni suburb where most of the shacks are situated. The new satellite fire station is one of our capital priorities for the new financial year. The location of the satellite fire station will assist fire fighters to reach fires in that area in a shorter time and the idea is also to train volunteer fire fighters who live near the fire station to respond promptly to fire incidents, together with the permanent fire fighters.

We once again appeal to the Walvis Bay community to back away immediately and let in the fire trucks when a fire occurs. Firemen have been struggling to put out fires at times as they cannot get past vehicles or groups of people standing around. Children may get confused and run to the location where the fire is because they see adults doing it. This could cause great danger, especially to toddlers, who do not know what a fire is. One thing is for sure, our fire fighters will always give it their best shot to ensure people's safety comes first. Through their various educational campaigns, our fire-fighters under the leadership of Dennis Basson have done some wonderful work in educating our residents on safety issues. Fire incidences have decreased by as much as 70% over the past year, thanks to these campaigns. But we must aim to do even better, as we cannot afford to lose lives and property.

Fellow Councillors, Ladies and Gentlemen, I now have the pleasure of making a very important announcement. You will recall a few weeks ago the NMH Group ran a competition under the theme "A Cleaner Town, a Cleaner Namibia", in which Walvis Bay did quite well. Although we didn't win the ultimate prize as Ondangwa was adjudged to have the best practices in place to ensure a clean town, we were however singled out for running the best SMS campaign. Our supporters were in line to win various prizes, and the main winners will be announced at this point. I would like to ask Mr. Fried Fredericks, the main sponsor of a dolphin cruise on his beloved boat *Alice*, to join me.

(Draw takes place and winners are announced).

Congratulations to the winners and thank you to Mr. Fredericks, the owner of *Walvis Bay Tours cc*, for his assistance during the campaign. We also congratulate Ondangwa for their outstanding achievement in this competition, as well as our neighbour Swakopmund for winning the South African KykNet version of “Dorp van die Jaar”.

Everyone may be wondering when it will be our turn to scoop a major award again, but who knows, it may just be a matter of time!

On that happy note, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for your attention.