GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

STATEMENT: MEETING WITH EDUCATORS ON IMPROVEMENT OF SALARIES AND BENEFITS FOR PUBLIC SERVICE (EDUCATORS)

BY

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Fellow Namibians, Educators, parents and learners in particular,

1. Let me begin to pay tribute to the hundreds of thousands of Namibians who are engaged in Public Service and to educators in particular. Not ordinary educators but great and professional educators indeed, the patriots who put teaching first with compassion and diligence against all odds thus marching for a brighter and prosperous Namibia.

2. I have come to air my voice as the Minister responsible for teaching and learning in Namibia, on the most unfortunate looming strike of teachers at a critical stage of schooling of our Namibian children.

The challenges facing our teachers in Namibia are well recognised and acknowledged from the most remote teacher to the most urbanised teacher hence the tireless efforts by our Government to continuously increasing the salaries and benefits of the teachers.

3. The Government of Namibia and the Ministry under my watch is indeed sympathetic and considerate of the hardships faced by some employees in general and the teacher in particular hence our conscious efforts and commitment to improve the livelihoods of all Namibians in order to propel them into prosperity.

4. We cannot deny that the Namibian Education System and fraternity is faced with numerous challenges which need urgent parallel attention from the State, however, it must be appreciated that those are competing with equally critical needs at other sectors of Government. The Government is therefore not always able to respond immediately to the demands of her workforce. That must be appreciated and understood by all loyal and patriotic Namibians and teachers in particular.

5. The teaching profession is one steeped in morality and ethics, and these are the traits we wish to cultivate in our children. We have a high portion of learners who are dropping out of school or are facing their external exams in
a few weeks from now. I would like to plead with you not to turn your back on our children at such a critical time.

6. My colleagues, please do not think that we are working against you or that we are unsympathetic in any way. The Government of the Republic of Namibia allocates a substantial portion of our national budget to education. I am afraid that at this point we simply do not have more to give than what we offer. We urge you to be understanding and patient as we work towards a more just remuneration system for our education workforce hence the direction of professionalization of teaching profession through the Educator Policy which the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture is currently working towards.

7. We humbly acknowledge that you are frustrated and we are addressing your concerns with sincerity. The Ministry is conducting an external review of our entire finance system to allow us to reprioritize and optimise the funding allocation in education. I can assure you that you educators will be our priority as always. But in the meantime your industrial action will serve only to hinder the learners, without reaching your desired outcome. The biggest losers will be our learners and ourselves.

8. The Government of the Republic of Namibia is committed to ensure that the Public Servants are well remunerated, well managed and well taken care of in order to deliver quality services. In order to do that, we need to manage the public service in an affordable manner especially in times like these when we are faced by drought, food shortages, hunger, poverty and many other calamities.

9. The voting period for teachers has been set for the 6-15 September 2016. The Government henceforth cautions all the educators to vote rationally by considering the consequences attached to voting in favour of a strike because “no work no pay policy will apply”.

10. A strike will result in serious disruption of teaching and learning; it is exam period now and as such the examination session will be disrupted and our learners will be traumatised psychologically, and further endure irreversible disadvantages.
11. The Government therefore, strongly appeals to all the educators not to vote in favour of a strike. The Government will fulfil the agreement of paying 5% to educators during this financial year (2016/17) and 7% during next financial year (2017/18).

12. **Without pre-empting your decision in this regard, please be aware that a decision to strike will result in the following:**

   (a) the education of school going children will be negatively affected by the strike with long term negative impacts.

   (b) employees who opt to strike will lose their income during the period that they are striking and this will directly affect other fringe benefits. As stated in the Labour Act No.11 of 2007, Sector 76 (1). “By taking part in a strike or a lockout in compliance with this Chapter, a person does not commit a delict or a breach of contract, **but an employer is not obliged to remunerate an employee for services that the employee does not render during a strike or lockout in compliance with this Chapter.**”

13. Employees who will opt to remain at work and continue with their normal duties will be remunerated accordingly. Such employees should not be prevented from working or should not be intimidated by those employees who opt to go on strike. The Conciliator remains seized with the dispute throughout, and it is our hope that both NANTU and government will continue to engage each other in order to avoid a situation that could lead to the disadvantage of the Namibian child.

14. **In conclusion:**

   The education sector has always been a top priority of the Government of the Republic of Namibia as this sector has been receiving the largest allocation from the national budget.

   i. Currently the education budget takes up the bulk of the total national budget of which 73 % has gone to the wage bill, meaning salaries of staff.

   ii. The Government has been unfairly accused of being indifferent to the plight of the teachers, yet research have shown that in comparison to bigger economies such as South Africa and Botswana with inflation rates
averaged at 6.54% and 7.58% respectively, Namibia, with its current inflation rate of 7%, still surpasses these countries in terms of teacher salaries. Teacher’s salary scales, per annum in Namibia, for example in grade 8, ranges from 192,947 to 230,591, while teachers salaries in grade 9, ranges from 157,715 to 189,165. Principal’s salaries range from 349,499 to 417,683 per annum. A newly qualified educator and those with less than 5 years’ experience earns R115 276 in South Africa, while teachers with 5 to 9 years’ experience have salaries between R124 038 and R146 087. Teachers with 10 years plus experience earn R146 088 plus per year. In Botswana, the average Monthly salary in Botswana in Teaching is 10,500 BWP.

iii. The Government, therefore, calls upon NANTU and the entire teaching fraternity to appreciate the challenges that are posed by their demand of more than 5% which is beyond the ability of the government to afford at this stage.

15. In the spirit of Harambee, no citizen (employed or unemployed) should feel left out. The Government thus urges NANTU and the teaching fraternity to carefully consider the implications of their actions on the future of the Namibian child and the development of the land of the brave.

16. With this in mind, I thank you for your hard work, and trust that we can continue to rely on your loyalty. You are not going unheard, but we are coming to you as colleagues, asking you to be patient, while we improve the system to make things better in the months and years to come. Lastly, I also wish to appreciate the teachers who have already taken a sober, mature and patriotic decision, namely not to strike.

I thank you!