

**Air Marshal Martin Kambulu Pinehas, Chief of the
Defence Force**

**Dr Wilhelmina Shivute, Executive Director of the
Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs,**

Dear Service Commanders,

General Officers

Senior Officers and Equivalent,

Officers and other ranks,

Distinguished delegates

I would like to start by thanking the Chief of the Defence Force for having invited me to come and officiate at this very important review conference. They say in order to know where you are going, you have to know where you are coming from. In order to move forward and in the right direction, it is necessary that you reflect on the past so that you see what gaps to fill going forward. I therefore would like to commend the Namibian Defence

Force (NDF), for having initiated and stuck to the culture of annually conducting a review of its activities in order to shape the future.

Reviews are a source of feedback and they provide the opportunity for yourselves to pat each other on the back for a job well done over the past year, and to highlight, with the aim to improve, areas that may need more attention in the coming year.

It is at a platform like this one, where you come and make necessary adjustments to your strategies and policies to ensure that they are aligned to the needs of the 21st century defence force.

Of course, I understand we do not have all the resources needed to take our defence force where we desire it to be. In fact, you are about to review one of the toughest periods of our epoch in terms of the economy of the

country. It goes without saying that the year under review has been the most challenging across all sectors, the security sector included. Our budget as the Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs has dwindled, affecting operations of entities such as yours. As a result, you have not been able to recruit young and energetic men and women required in the force, our ability to train our current soldiers has been impeded, while your capability to procure equipment has been abridged.

All this is due to the COVID-19 pandemic which has brought most economies around the world on their knees. Despite this challenge, we can still celebrate the fact that we were not forced to take drastic measures such as having to lay-off some of our military personnel.

We have continued to use the available financial resources strategically, and since we do not know how long this pandemic will still be with us, I would like to

urge you, as you chart the way forward, to plan within the current limitations and to prioritise to the best of your ability.

The best resource that we have which the COVID-19 Pandemic will never be able to take away from us is the brain power, determination and zeal to execute our duties. Let us use what we have efficiently and effectively to achieve our objectives in the midst of the pandemic.

Distinguished delegates,

I have fashioned my address around an encouragement theme, which is, “Equipping our defence force to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing context”. Therefore, everything I speak about here today should be consumed within that context. Our expenditure on fuel and other bills related to our usage of vehicles are very high.

Our current economic situation does not at all allow us to bask in extreme comfort, as such, we have to strictly adhere to Government policies on the usage of vehicles. Even if we are to recover economically, we will still be expected to strictly adhere to the policies of the Government.

Those that are on car schemes, you are reminded that you are supposed to use your own vehicles to go to your work stations and around your towns of residence. The only exception is when you have to travel outside your localities on official assignments.

The amount of money that would be saved through this would go a long way in assisting equipping our defence force. Discipline is the cornerstone of a good military; it is therefore imperative that we lead by example. The discipline should start with us as leaders/commanders, and it shall then naturally cascade to those we lead.

Equipping our defence force does not only entail materially, we also need to thoroughly prepare our soldiers so that they can have the character and discipline of a person befitting of being adorned in our military uniform.

You are urged to continuously remind our soldiers that they belong to a people's army. We should be people oriented and not seen to be abusing our status as members of the defence force by trying to become a law unto ourselves. In cases where we are provoked, we are still required to have self-control because we are properly trained.

General Officers, Senior Officers,

As I earlier indicated, we need to be on our toes at all times because the technology aspect of the defence industry is fast evolving. I visited the Russian Federation in June this year at the invitation of that country's

Defence Minister, General Sergey Shoigu. He spoke about how hypersonic technology, digitalization, and robotisation were coming to the forefront in the development of new weapons. Space and cyberspace were becoming increasingly involved in military confrontations.

Dear Generals and commanders, as we usher into the 4th Industrial Revolution, we need to start focusing some of our resources on technology to ensure that we are not too far away from our peers in the industry.

I am told there is a lack of intensive training and a need for refresher courses for our staff in the Information and Communication Technology to acquire the necessary skills on critical fields so that our dependency on service providers can be eased, and for us to take full ownership of the maintenance of our ICT infrastructure.

The sensitivity of the MODVA and NDF's work does not require dependency on outside organisations because that compromises our security. It is of serious concern to note that since the expiry of the Bulk Encryption Devices in 2016, our NDF Wide Area Network has been minimally secured by an open source software for computers networks security.

Because of this, the MODVA and NDF computer network is susceptible to hacking and cyber-attacks. In this regard, let us invest without delay, in equipping our young men and women with the necessary knowledge and modern network security devices that would ensure a higher degree of security is provided.

I would also like to encourage you to develop interest in current affairs, be it locally or internationally. We need to be aware of what is happening in our neighbouring countries and those further away so that we can learn

from the political trends in such countries, for us to better prepare our soldiers to be ready for any eventuality in our own backyard. We need to be wary of the fact that we are as Namibians, an open society and it is thus easy for opportunists to incite soldiers to revolt and cause pandemonium in the country.

Distinguished delegates,

They say, an idle mind is a devil's workshop, meaning, a mind that is not productive may end up thinking of getting involved in inappropriate activities. As I conclude, I would like to urge you to find ways to keep our soldiers productive.

Let's include in our plans, programmes that will compel our soldiers to construct barracks, bridges, etcetera, if and when called upon. Similarly, it is about time our force started having inter sport and cultural activities among units so that they are kept busy and productive.

I look forward to a day where we shall start having our own cultural troop that would be entertaining us at events such as this.

On that note ladies and gentlemen, I would now like to wish you a Merry Christmas and a better 2022. For those of you who will be taking time off, enjoy your vaccination and please rest so that you come back fully invigorated. For those that will stay put, continue to keep the ship afloat.

It is now my distinct honour, to declare the 12th CDF Annual Review Conference, officially open.

I thank you.