

**Keynote address by Honorable Minister of Justice Ms. Yvonne Dausab on occasion of the launch of the GIPF whistle blower platform on 6 September 2022 at 10h30 at the AM Weinberg.**

The Chairperson of the GIPF Board of Trustees Ms. Nillian Mulemi and the trustees of the GIPF Board, the CEO/Principal Officer of the Fund, Mr. David Nuyoma and the Senior Management of the Fund, the Ombudsman of the Republic of Namibia, Mr. Basilius Dyakugha, Deputy Inspector-General of the Namibian Police Major General Anna-Marie Nainda, the Director General of the Anti-Corruption Commission, Mr. Paulus Noah, the Secretary General of NANTU, Ms Loide Shaanika, the Executive Director of the Retirement Funds Institute of Namibia, Ms. Maria Gaomas, the CEO of NASIA, captains of industry, invited guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It is indeed an honor and privilege to deliver keynote remarks at this occasion, marking the launch of the GIPF Whistle Blower Platform, under the theme: **“Towards fostering an ethical culture in GIPF: Whistleblowing as an enabler for deterring unethical conduct”**

This theme is not only timely but indeed relevant as we live in a world where instilling ethics in organizations is indeed a challenge, whether in the public or private sector. Ethics is about honesty, morality, righteousness, integrity and doing the right thing even when no one is watching. Ethical companies have an edge over their peers as this is an attribute which is considered a source of competitive advantage.

It goes without saying that setting up a whistleblower line or platform is a very critical step in creating a supportive environment toward fostering a strong ethical culture. We are gathered here today, to mark an important milestone in a journey that this Fund undertook to actively manage ethics just like any other strategic function e.g. risk management, internal audit, compliance management. This resolve was undertaken out of the conviction that, for GIPF to make good on its vision, to become a leading pension fund globally, it needs to integrate ethical leadership and ethics management in its decision-making, policies, practices, procedures, systems and processes. During 2019, the GIPF adopted a whistleblower policy, which effectively made whistleblower protection part of

the Fund's policy framework. This policy, which is aligned to the Whistleblower Protection Act, No. 10 of 2017, provides under section 9 that GIPF would make available toll-free whistleblower facility. And it is the launch of that facility that we are witnessing today.

This launch therefore signifies that this Fund, which has a membership of over 145 000 members, retirees and annuitants and has an asset value of N\$140 billion, sees the fight against corruption as a critical component in preserving and growing its value for the benefit of its stakeholders. Your decision to take the fight this far will help the Fund in realizing the following ideals:

- Assist in inculcating a culture of speaking out;
- Provide for procedures under which employees and other stakeholders can speak out without fear of occupational detriment, intimidation and reprisals;
- To provide for a platform for receiving of feedback on action taken against any suspected misconduct, breaches and concerns.

The fact that the Government Institution Pension Fund has aligned its policy alongside the provisions of the Whistleblower Protection Act No 10 of 2017, is a clear illustration that Government, the Public Sector, Private Sector and Civil Society all have a part to play in collectively fighting the scourge of corruption. We commend GIPF, as a responsible organization in Namibia in adopting its whistleblower policy and subsequently launching this platform. This is indeed a bold and responsible step in your journey whereby, where rather than wait for the Government to operationalize the Whistleblower Protection Act, No 10 of 2017, you have taken a proactive step in meeting government half-way.

This now takes me to a point where I would like to address the issue of the delay in implementation of the whistleblower protection legislation. The Government of the Republic of Namibia enacted the Whistle Blower Protection Act, 10 of 2017 with the primary aim to provide a legislative framework for the protection of whistleblowers. The legislation specifically provides for the Whistle Blower Protection Office and relevant procedures for making disclosures of improper conduct, the investigation of disclosures of improper conduct and protection of whistle blowers. It further provides for investigation

of complaints of detrimental actions, the review of certain decisions and the remedies of person(s) against whom detrimental action is taken.

It must be emphasized that, as the Government in general and the Ministry of Justice in particular, we remain committed to ensuring the implementation of this legislation. However, this must be done appropriately and effectively and this is where the costs of the implementation comes in. The latest estimate placed the cost of this exercise at N\$160 million per annum if one takes into account the Financial and Human Capital costs involved in implementing the law. The Funds are simply not available, and hence our drive to source alternative sources of funding such as grants in order to realise this noble objective. One needs no reminder that the economic decline in 2016, followed by the impact of Covid-19 challenges in 2020 and most recently the adverse economic impacts of the Russia-Ukraine war. These developments have all driven the Government to re-think its priorities by focusing on the absolute essentials. As a responsible Government, we remain resolute in finding a solution and have embarked on innovative initiatives towards sourcing funding to enable the implementation of this legislation. This could be in the form of grants from donors and development partners. It should be pointed out, that ensuring good governance, of which whistle blower protection is a component of, is both part of the Ministry of Justice strategic plan as well as the Harambee Prosperity Plan; and we would want to implement it at the earliest opportunity, rather than delay its implementation.

Let me remind the various stakeholders in this audience today that, whistle blower protection is not only a responsibility under the Whistle Blower Protection Act, No. 10 of 2017. There are other laws such as the Anti-Corruption Act, No. 8 of 2003, The Financial Intelligence Act, No. 13 of 2012, The Witness Protection Act, No. 11 of 2017 and the Prevention of Organised Crime Act, No. 29 of 2004. In terms of all these laws, there are provisions that provide safeguards for protection of whistleblowers. We therefore urge the administrators of these laws to provide adequate protection to whistleblowers as entities such as GIPF and others alike exercise their rights in terms of these laws.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that the launch of this platform should not be a mere public relations exercise to enhance the GIPF brand. Rather, I implore the Board

and management of GIPF to render the necessary support, in whatever manner or form, to ensure that there is adequate support for the follow-through on reports, ensuring that perpetrators of irregular conduct are brought to book and that the whistleblowers are not victimized.

I thank you.