Opinion

Good Governance in Public Enterprises Is a Matter of Public Survival

President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah's recent call for stronger governance in public enterprises comes at a time when the state of governance across many such institutions is under serious scrutiny. Her message was not just a call to action, it was a warning, and rightly so. Namibia's public enterprises exist for one purpose: to serve the public interest and fulfil government's development mandate. Whether through delivering essential services, creating employment, or driving industrial growth, these institutions are meant to be enablers of national prosperity. But governance failures continue to undermine this mission. Cases of mismanagement, financial irregularities, and corruption, many still under investigation, reveal a systemic breakdown in oversight and accountability.

When public enterprises misuse resources, they are not just falling short of performance targets. They are compromising the effective use of taxpayers' money. Worse still, when corruption enters the equation, public officials are effectively stealing from the very people they are meant to serve. Every dollar lost to poor governance is a dollar taken from healthcare, education, infrastructure, or food security.

The consequences of weak governance are not abstract. They are felt in under-resourced clinics, delayed infrastructure projects, and rising public frustration. Good governance, then, is not a luxury or a box-ticking exercise, it is a matter of public survival.

This is precisely why the Namibia Institute of Corporate Governance (NICG) has embarked on a Governance Ranking Study. While the study is still underway, its purpose is clear: to assess the state of governance in public institutions, identify gaps, and promote a culture of accountability, transparency, and performance.

President Nandi-Ndaitwah's message aligns closely with our vision. Her challenge to public enterprise leaders to prioritise ethical leadership and development planning is a step in the right direction but it must be followed by concrete reform. Boards must be equipped and empowered to exercise oversight. Executives must be held to performance and ethical standards and state institutions must adopt governance frameworks that prioritise public value over political or personal gain.

It is time for public enterprises to move beyond compliance and demonstrate commitment to real, measurable governance outcomes. Good governance is not merely an administrative requirement. It is the foundation of national progress and in the public sector, it is a moral imperative.

+264 81 666 8645

www.nicg.org.na

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