



MODTAGET  
LEDELSESSEKRETARIATET

Dato 15/10-07 Kl.

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Ref: 8/4/2/5

12 September 2007

Hon. Christian Mejdahl  
Speaker of the Folketinget  
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My Esteemed Colleague

I start my letter by extending to you my best wishes and fraternal goodwill since our rendezvous in Bali and I pray for your good health and renewed vitality. One is ever so aware that MPs chores, individually and collectively, continue to present us each day with awesome challenges but also with stimulating opportunities in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

In Bali, we were dramatically exposed to the horrors of climate change and we were urged as national leaders and global partners to join the various groups of concerned citizens who have taken up these challenges. As we are preoccupied daily with policy and social issues of human rights, democracy, economic and technological advancements, gender equality, poverty and terrorism, we can no longer ignore the harsh impact of global warming and the environment.

Of late, both the United Nations and the IPU are expressing similar concerns and engaging each other and others that are more resourceful to lead by example the way forward. With brutalized Mother Earth, human survival, peace-building and sustainable development will become difficult to contemplate.

While legitimacy of some of the Civil Society activists is debatable, many among them have been in the forefront of worthy causes and making lasting contributions in democratization, capacity building and often creating constructive networking and cooperation in infrastructures both in urban areas and rural communities.

Presently, we IPU member Parliaments and cooperating partners are mainstreaming and consolidating our own mechanisms and channels of communication to further strengthen responsibilities of representation, legislative agenda and overall oversight functions in respect of various branches of Government. The people want more and not less of our actions.

In respect of 'international civil society', I share the views of those who look to the UN General Assembly, Economic and Social Council and well-resourced Office of the Secretary-General to ensure that the United Nations is of "We the Peoples of the World", real masters in elected democracies. Ideals do often become realities when practical options see that as the only way to go forward. I heartily welcome and see everything good in further strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. One is an organization of Governments and the other is a Union of Parliaments. Between them they collaborate to promote the rights and interest of citizenry.

By now, I believe, my esteemed colleague, you may have already come across the announcement of my candidature for IPU Presidency for next term starting in October 2008. Even so, I consider my writing this personal letter to you necessary and timely. I do so to inform you and kindly request your early endorsement and active support I trust that I can count on your cooperation and solidarity.

My colleagues of the SADC-PF unanimously nominated me in June 2007 as our regions and inevitably as Africa's candidate indeed. In this we are strengthened in the knowledge that IPU's Presidency for the coming term is Africa's turn!

I take liberty, my Dear Friend, to briefly share with you some of the other aspects of my background and professional career. My biographical note is readily available on [www.parliament.gov.na](http://www.parliament.gov.na). My thoughts and longstanding activities on the world stage cover a period of more than 40 years. In the present context I have combined extensive Cabinet and Parliamentary duties. I, therefore, strongly believe that today our ongoing challenge requires strengthening at all levels parliamentary democracy consolidating cooperation among the United Nations, the IPU, the National Parliaments and the Civil Society. We will be well-placed as MP's to learn from each other's successes and emulate best practices,

while upholding the rule of law and political pluralism. This, I believe, is the best way for us to work together, consulting one another on issues of public policy, legislation, oversight function in our respective Parliaments, as well as on matters of regional and international priorities. Multilateral negotiations, parliamentary diplomacy and exchange of knowledge and information on global trends improve better understanding and common outlook.

I also hold the view that peace-building, human development and performance management indicators put the human factor first. For that we need a manifest and functional culture of consensus-building. Peaceful co-existence and celebration of cultural diversity multiply opportunities for growth, development and empowerment of the people. I, therefore, welcome the IPU's active and creative involvement in the UN programmes and, public hearings, for example, while creating its own platforms for dialogue and further enhancement of capabilities.

As the society unlocks some of the ancient mysteries of human condition, we become bolder and imaginative each day to try new things. We have realized that multilateral cooperation is better than unilateral action that breaks trust and creates unnecessary tensions. To contain and let us hope and defeat HIV/AIDS, terrorism gender imbalance, climate change, energy crisis and degradation of the environment, we need trust and cooperation as noble virtues.

At a most propitious conjunction of the old and the new millennia, I was unanimously elected President of the 54<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly Session (1999-2000). I saw that historic moment as a new beginning and a promise for a better future for humanity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I worked closely with the very astute and dedicated UN Secretary-General, my Brother, Kofi Annan and his senior staff. I thank them all for generously assisting my office and inspiring my vision and mission.

My awesome duty, beyond the routine responsibilities, was the central and hands-on responsibility in the drafting and adoption of the UN Millennium Declaration (2000), containing the economic recovery, social development and poverty reduction goals and targets. Major challenges of life for nations as for organisations, villages, urban slums and individuals put everything on the same ship leading to prosperity or to disaster. Big and small alike are helpless when confronted by disasters such as tsunamis, hurricanes, earthquakes, AIDS and so on. I am celebrating our common humanity freed of war, suffering and poverty, and enjoying peace and equality. We are entitled to a new beginning and a better future that is inclusive and mutually beneficial to all. But to get there, humans must embrace a choice collectively, because it is the right thing to do.

I apologise for perhaps prolonging my liberty too much. These are some areas of social life and public interest I wanted to share with you. I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to have engaged you in this way. There will be other engagements.

With my best wishes and highest consideration

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Theo-Ben Gurirab'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial 'T' and 'B'.

**Hon. Theo-Ben Gurirab, MP  
Speaker**



# Biography of

**Hon. Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab**

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of the Republic of Namibia

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**T**he Hon. Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab is the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Namibia, elected to this position on 20 March 2005. His last position was as the Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia (2002 – 2005). Prior to that Dr. Gurirab was Minister of Foreign Affairs (1990 – 2002). His portfolio between 2000-2002 included that of being the Minister of Information and Broadcasting also. Dr. Gurirab held the title of Dean of African Foreign Ministers until 2002. Dr. Gurirab was a member of the Constituent Assembly Constitution Drafting Committee and also a Founding Member of Parliament. He is a member of the Central Committee and Politburo of the SWAPO Party since 1990.

In over 35 years in the field of international affairs and diplomacy, he has known and worked with three generations of world leaders and five Secretaries-General of the United Nations. In 1999, he returned to the United Nations to serve as President of the 54th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. He was instrumental in driving the UN reform process forward and presided over the drafting of the historic United Nations Millennium Declaration in 2000. Contrary to the UN tradition, drafting of the Declaration was not done in the Committee of the Whole, but entrusted to the President himself and his advisors. It was during his tenure as President of the UN General Assembly that the decision to accord Observer Status to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) was taken.

As a seasoned diplomat and negotiator, Dr. Gurirab had served for 14 years as SWAPO's Chief Representative to the United Nations and, later, as its Permanent Observer. Under his stewardship, SWAPO of Namibia was accorded a Permanent Observer status at the United Nations. From 1986 to 1990, he was SWAPO's Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Throughout these years, he played a major part in multilateral negotiations and conference diplomacy leading to Namibia's independence.

Over the 14 years of his stewardship as SWAPO's top diplomat at the United Nations, from 1972 to 1986, the organization's political and diplomatic status grew from that of a petitioner on the sidelines of diplomacy to a mainstream negotiator and participant in the international arena. Through his efforts Dr. Gurirab made the struggle of the Namibian people a cause of celebre of the international community. The protracted negotiations that produced UN Security Council Resolution 435 of 1978, containing an internationally accepted plan to bring independence to Namibia, represented one of the high points of his political and diplomatic career.

Dr. Gurirab was one of the first SWAPO leaders to return home in 1989, to help organize pre-independence elections. He was also one of the leading SWAPO negotiators of the ceasefire agreement, signed in March 1989, between South Africa's apartheid régime and SWAPO, which set the pace for elections and the emplacement of UNTAG in Namibia and the transition to independence. Dr. Gurirab was elected in 1989 to Namibia's Constituent Assembly. That Assembly was transformed into the country's first National Assembly in 1990 and elected Dr. Sam Nujoma as President of the Republic of Namibia.

Among his major achievements as Foreign Minister, Dr. Gurirab led three years of negotiations over Walvis Bay and Offshore Islands that were reintegrated into Namibia during 1994. This was a sterling fulfillment of the letter and spirit of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 432 (1978). Working to promote regional and sub regional cooperation, he represented Namibia, in 1995, on the bureau of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Council of Ministers. That year, as the Council's First Vice-Chairman, he presided over the first Extraordinary Session of the Central Organ of the OAU for the Prevention, Management and Resolution of Conflicts. He is also the co-founder of the African-Latin American Initiative, an organization that was meant to bringing together the countries South of Africa and South of America in a network of cooperation, solidarity and partnership aimed at promoting support, trade and economic cooperation.

Dr. Gurirab's political career began in 1962 when he fled Namibia to Tanzania. He was to remain in political exile for the next 27 years. In 1963, upon being awarded a United Nations Fellowship, he proceeded to the United States to study. In 1964, he was appointed along with Dr. Hage Geingob and Mr. Hidipo Hamutenya as one of SWAPO's troika of Associate Representatives to the United Nations and the Americas, serving in that capacity while simultaneously pursuing their education.

A United Nations Fellow throughout his University career, in 1998 Dr. Gurirab received an award from the World Association of Former United Nations Internes and Fellows, "in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the promotion of human rights, peace and development, especially within the context of promoting Namibia's nation-building and the role that the United Nations training and other economic and technical cooperation activities can still play in furthering the goals and principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations".

He was awarded an Honorary Professorship of Foreign Affairs College, founded by Premier Chou El Lai in 1955, of the People's Republic of China in 2000. This was only the third time that a foreigner was awarded this title. He is also a founding member of the Olympic Truce Foundation in 2000 in Athens, Greece along with numerous Heads of States, Nobel Prize Laureates and other renowned international personalities. Dr. Gurirab is an Honorary Member of the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation since 2002.

Born on 23 January 1938 in Usakos, Namibia, Dr. Gurirab graduated with a teaching diploma from the Augustineum Training College in Okahandja in 1960. He went on to study at Temple University in Pennsylvania, where he obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science in 1969 and did advanced postgraduate studies in international relations in 1970 - 1971. In 1999, he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Law degree from the University of Namibia, in recognition of his outstanding leadership in the field of foreign policy and diplomacy.

Dr. Gurirab is married and has two daughters and two sons.

