

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE LAW  
SOCIETY OF NAMIBIA  
ALWYN HARMSE  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE HIGH COURT  
LEGAL YEAR OPENING ON  
THURSDAY, 16 JANUARY 2014**

- Honourable Judge President
- Honourable Minister of Justice
- My Lords and my Ladies
- Honourable Attorney-General
- Honourable Ombudsman
- Learned Prosecutor-General
- Permanent Secretary of Justice
- Learned President of the Society of Advocates
- Learned President of the Namibia Law Association
- Senior Counsel
- Distinguished legal practitioners and candidate legal practitioners
- Registrar and staff of the High Court
- Media representatives
- Ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of the Council of the LSN I wish to thank the Honourable Judge President for the opportunity to address you on this auspicious occasion.

**LOOKING BACK ON 2013:**

- 2013 was an eventful year full of challenges but thankfully it was also a year of achievements for the LSN.
- In line with our mission to 'improve the standards of legal practice and as part of our continuing professional development we presented 10 training seminars which was

well attended by various members in the Government service / the corporate environment and private practice.

- Council in an attempt to reach out to all our members were fortunate to hold four circle meetings during which issues of legal practice and public and professional interest were addressed.
- Grievances and issues of concern such as the JTC were raised by members and were brought to the attention of Council who are in the process of addressing same.
- At the end of 2013 the LSN launched its first year book that captures and gives an overview of the events that happened during the year.
- This transpired to be a useful reference tool especially to identify the new legal practitioners.
- Looking at the statistics of our members at the time of launching the yearbook there are 614 admitted legal practitioners of which:
  - 46 are employed in government
  - 98 are in the corporate environment
  - 4 are at the Legal Assistance Centre
  - 304 are practicing at 117 law firms
  - 37 are practising with exemption certificates as members of the Society of Advocates
  - 302 of these legal practitioners are from the racially disadvantaged group and
  - 256 of our legal practitioners are females.

## **LOOKING FORWARD TO 2014:**

- Various challenges such as the introduction of the new High Court Rules and the E-Justice systems await the legal profession, as was with the Judiciary Case Management system which was introduced towards the end of 2011 and over come.
- Before commenting on the focus and projects for 2014 of the Law Society, I wish to pause and stress:
  1. That it is incumbent upon each and every one of us to uphold the dignity of the Judiciary.
  2. To fiercely protect its independence to ensure the Application of the Rule of Law, and
  3. To refrain from promoting our own agendas to the detriment of the ultimate goal namely the due administration of Justice.
- It is further imperative and in the interest of Justice that all stakeholders join forces, be consistent, work together and not against.

## **THE YEAR AND THE TASK AHEAD:**

The Council and Directorate during its planning session on 13<sup>th</sup> January outlined certain projects and focus area for 2014.

- In line with our focus on continuing Professional Development a hectic program has already been prepared in 2013 and will be circulated among our members, which will give all legal practitioners (and candidate legal practitioners) in all the spheres of the profession an opportunity to improve their professional skills and competence.
- Another important focus area are the Amendments to the Legal Practitioners Act and the LSN is now at the stage where we are able to discuss the outcome of our strategic

planning sessions on the proposed amendments to the Act, the policies and the principles with the Honourable Minister of Justice.

- Some of the aspects that require urgent attention are to streamline the Justice Training Centre system, to make the training of candidate legal practitioners more practical, to uplift the standards and to ensure the efficient functioning of the statutory independent Disciplinary Committee - to mention a few.
- As the governing body of all the legal practitioners in Namibia the LSN has a huge duty to inter alia, protect the integrity of the profession to maintain standards and to manage risks. We do not take these tasks lightly, however the scarcity of resources are a reality and even though making money is not our main priority times have unfortunately changed and the LSN is looking at its sustainability to meet our duties, projects and new demands.
- As poor communication or the lack thereof has been the culprit in many instances, focus will be placed on a comprehensive communication strategy as it is of the utmost importance that there should be constant and open communication between the LSN, Judiciary, stakeholders and the public.
- The LSN has also gone through a rather cumbersome and expensive process to update our website and data base.
- Our updated website will be launched by the end of January 2014 and will offer more benefits to our members and the public in general.
- Our long-term vision is to offer training opportunities for our members via the internet especially with the CPD point system in mind.
- We believe that our 17 standing committees, which deal with various aspects of the law and making recommendations to

Council, will also be kept very busy this year as they will also be required to assist with keeping the educational information of the website current and interesting.

- In addition to the Year Book for 2014, the Director will also finalise a book this year, capturing the period from November 2005 to November 2012.

### **CLOSING REMARKS:**

By the end of 2013, all the people we spoke to complained about a hectic a year and how tired they all felt.

I hope that the holiday season has revived our spirits and that after a well-deserved rest we are all looking forward to the challenges that 2014 may bring.

Let's trust that 2014's challenges will make us stronger and more resilient.

I thank you.

**Alwyn Harmse**  
**President: LSN**