



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF LABOUR, INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS & EMPLOYMENT CREATION

MEDIA STATEMENT

ON

THE CONSUMER BOYCOTT

AT

CHECKERS GROUP OF COMPANIES (SHOPRITE)

BY

PERMANENT SECRETARY

OF

MINISTRY OF LABOUR, INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND CREATION

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WINDHOEK

Members of the Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Very Good Morning

I would like to sincerely thank you for joining me and my Team at this Briefing.

Ladies and Gentlemen

As you are certainly aware, since last weekend, the social media was flooded with messages criss-crossing all the available platforms on the “Boycott Shoprite”.

Print and electronic media were also banging at this Ministry’s door to get, first, the position of Government, and second, to be updated on what Government, this Ministry in particular, has done to normalize the deteriorated labour relations at Shoprite.

This Briefing therefore, is called to just do that.

1. The Government of the Republic of Namibia has been engaging and encouraging Shoprite Management and trade unions organizing at Shoprite to meet and resolve their differences amicably and through established procedures.

2. Shoprite was advised, amongst others: -
 - 2.1 to speed-up its internal disciplinary process that it has instituted against ±93 employees, or
 - 2.2 to halt the process altogether, but to no avail.

3. On 8th December 2017, the affected employees requested the Ministry to direct Shoprite to drop the charges against them. To this end, they were correctly informed that the Ministry has no legal authority to instruct any employer to drop any charges against its employees. Instead, they were advised to urge their representatives to impress upon the speedy finalization of the Disciplinary Hearing.

4. On 12 March 2018, the Ministry had a meeting with TUCNA, which, amongst others, Shoprite labour situation was discussed as far as the union fee deductions are concerned and the trade union was requested to table their proposal at the Working Committee on the Revision of the Labour Act for consideration.

5. Again on the 19 April 2018, the Ministry had a meeting with NAFAU specifically on the Shoprite Labour Relations and Trade Union Organizational rights.

The Ministry was updated that while NAFAU has recruited enough employees and was at the verge of joint verification, Shoprite changed its mind and did the verification unilaterally contrary to the procedural arrangements and mutual respect.

The Meeting was further informed that Shoprite, as way of stifling, the trade union, it had stopped deducting union fees, and the union was denied access to Shoprite premises as an effort to curtail and restrict union activities at Shoprite. It was at this Meeting that the Consumer Boycott Shoprite was proposed by NAFAU. This was to be announced soon.

As the Ministry responsible, which wants an orderly collective bargaining process, promotion and maintenance of harmonious labour relation at Shoprite, it invited Shoprite to an urgent meeting on the same day, 19 April 2018, for the scheduled meeting on **23rd April 2018**. The idea was again to inform Shoprite on new development. Shoprite, keeping in its, behavioral disrespect informed the Ministry that it has prior arranged training hence cannot attend. Arrogantly, inform the Ministry that it was only going to be available during the week of 21-24 May 2018, a month thereafter. The Ministry took this position of Shoprite as insubordination hence unacceptable.

As it can be seen, contrary to some insinuations, the Ministry has been actively trying: -

- to urge Shoprite to either **speed-up its internal processes** or totally discontinue the **whole exercise**, a call that was not headed to,

- to try and encourage dialogue between trade unions and Shoprite towards the organizational rights in a civilized and mutual respectable fashion, and
- as a Ministry responsible for orderly collective bargaining and harmonious labour relations for the whole country, while is trying to balance the scale it is upon the other parties to come forth and do their part too. If one party is an unwilling, uncooperative and uncaring partner, then of course the Ministry sympathizes with the other party, which in its, view is right.

It is on this basis that Government is fully aware of the implications of the National Consumer Boycott but it has to rely behind it for moral and social support.

While the Government invites possible investors to assist in its developmental agenda, it wants genuine investors with good intention and willing to operate within the ambit of the Namibian legal and policy framework at all times.

Namibia is a society of tolerant citizens but that tolerance is not limitless.

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