Remarks by Charge d'Affaires Thurmond H. Borden
At Official Opening of Walvis Bay Multi-Purpose Center
July 12, 2001

The Honorable Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services Richard Kamwi

The Honorable Governor of Erongo Region Samuel Nuuyoma

Your Worship, the Mayor of Walvis Bay Teresia Samaria

The Honorable Councillor of Walvis Bay Hafeni Ndemula

Khorixas Regional Director of Basic Education, Sports and Culture Linus //Gaoreb

Multi-Purpose Center Director Beverly Figaji

Other distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen:

On behalf of the United States Embassy in Windhoek, it is a pleasure for me to welcome you all to the Official Opening of the Walvis Bay Multi-Purpose Center. I understand that the Center has been actually operating since early April, but this is the first opportunity for everyone to get together for a proper official opening ceremony.

I am delighted that the United States Government has been able to play a role in helping the dream of this community center become a reality for the people of Kuisebmund. I would like to explain briefly from my perspective the origins of this Multi-Purpose Center and the role the Embassy has played and the role we hope the Embassy will continue to play in this Center for the people of Kuisebmund and Walvis Bay.

When you look at this fine building, you may see just a building. But for me, this Multi-Purpose Center represents teamwork. Teamwork among the various agencies within the U.S. Embassy, and also the teamwork between

the U.S. Embassy, the Government of Namibia and the people of the City of Walvis Bay.

First, let me talk about the teamwork of the various agencies represented at the U.S. Embassy.

The construction of this facility itself and the furnishing of the interior of the facility were made possible by funds provided by the U.S. Department of Defense under its Humanitarian Assistance Program. The total value of that building was about 800 thousand Namibian dollars and the total value of the furnishings was about 200 thousand dollars.

Department of Defense programs, such as this one, provide a humanitarian venue for the U.S. military to engage with the civilian population in the nations where we have U.S. embassies. The Humanitarian Assistance Program is designed to assist Namibia and other host nations fund shortfalls in the construction of new medical and disaster assistance facilities. This year the Department of Defense will also spend about one million dollars to build and outfit a twenty-bed hospital at the Osire Refugee Camp. Later we will also fund about two million dollars to build and equip an orthopedic wing at the Oshakati State Hospital in the north.

I am privileged to work with an outstanding Defense Attache's office in Windhoek. I would like to recognize, at this time, the members of that office who worked so hard to make this project become a living reality. Would you please stand and take a bow. First, Lt. Colonel Lili Dawidowicz, our Defense Attache. Next, John Auffrey, our Security Assistance Officer, and finally Sr. Master Sargeant Gail Hooks, our Operations Coordinator.

The next member of the U.S. Embassy team that has played and is continuing to play an important role in this Multi-Purpose Center is the U.S. Agency for International Development or USAID. One of USAID's goals has been to help the Municipality of Walvis Bay build up its ability to care for those who live in its underprivileged neighborhoods. One of our hopes for the Multi-Purpose Center is that it will become a focal point of efforts to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS in the Erongo Region. Our vision is that this Multi-Purpose Center will not only be a Community Center for the people of Kuisebmund but that it will also become a place offering community-centered counseling, legal assistance for persons living with HIV/AIDS, and training for home-based caregiver services. To this end,

USAID has agreed to fund for a five-year period the position of Center Director, who is Beverly Figaji, one administrative position and activities designed to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS as requested and approved by the Walvis Bay Center Steering Committee. The total value of this USAID support will be about one million Namibian dollars.

Again, I am privileged to work with an outstanding and dedicated group of individuals at USAID. First, I would like to acknowledge the country director for USAID in Namibia, Diana Swain. One of the USAID contractors who have figured very prominently in the details of the Multi-Purpose Center is Carol Culler, who is with us today. Please stand Carol. Next, I would like to acknowledge the important contributions of our HIV/AIDS coordinator Kirk Lazell, who unfortunately could not be here today.

Finally, on the U.S. Embassy side I would like to acknowledge the contributions of the U.S. Peace Corps. Peace Corps in now recruiting a special volunteer to be assigned to the Multi-Purpose Center for several months to help organize various activities aimed at slowing the spread of HIV/AIDS and caring for persons infected and affected by the epidemic. As you may know, this year marks Peace Corps 40th anniversary worldwide and the 10th anniversary of Peace Corps in Namibia. Over 500 different volunteers have served two-year assignments in Namibia form September 1991 to the present.

Well, that concludes my recognition of team members from the United States side.

Next, I wish to acknowledge the many Namibian partners who have made this Multi-Purpose Center possible.

First, the City of Walvis Bay has been a key partner from the very beginning. The City and especially the mayor, Teresia Samaria, have offered their advice and encouragement at every step of the process. The land upon which the Multi-Purpose Center rests was donated by the City. In addition, the City of Walvis Bay is providing continuing security and maintenance for the building. Thank you, your Worship the mayor.

Next, I would like to acknowledge the contributions of the Ministry of Health and Social Services. As you know, the Ministry of Health is the

central player in the Namibian Government's response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. USAID and the Ministry are in the final stages of negotiating an agreement regarding cooperation in combating HIV/AIDS in this country. I don't think I am giving anything away by stating here that under this agreement Walvis Bay will be one of the four areas in the country that have been identified for concentration of efforts to stem the effects of the HIV epidemic. We hope this Multi-Purpose Center will be a hub for activities in the Walvis Bay area.

Next, I would like to recognize Catholic AIDS Action and the other non-governmental organizations that are organizing and running HIV/AIDS programs out of the Multi-Purpose Center. We are honored to have with us today, the national coordinator for Catholic AIDS Action, Lucy Steinitz. Lucy would mind standing a moment and letting every one see you.

Next, I should like to thank NISWA Construction Company of Gobabis. NISWA did the actual construction of the Multi-purpose Center. Nico and Tina Swart supervised the project and did a superb job. Some of you may wonder why we used a Gobabis-based company to construct a building in Walvis Bay. Well, the answer is they make the best proposal in terms of price, technical merit, completeness and timeliness. Thank you Nico and Tina for your wonderful work.