

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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While counting is still underway, it is expected that the incumbent South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) will maintain its majority in the National Assembly and its presidential candidate, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, will win the presidential election. The opposition has already said it will reject the results following the Electoral Commission of Namibia's (ECN) significant technical difficulties during the elections. Industrialisation and trade minister Lucia Lipumbu discusses using trade agreements to leverage economic growth despite some challenges. Namibia Water Corporation (NamWater) announces the appointment of monitoring consultants for the Water Support Programme 1.

Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah anticipated to be next president

Namibia held its national elections on 27 November, although votes are still being counted it seems the incumbent **South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO)** is on track to maintain a majority in the **National Assembly** and win the presidential election. As of 2 December, 65.57% of votes have been counted in the presidential election. Namibia is set to have its first female president with SWAPO candidate, **Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah**, securing 54.82% in the presidential race and the IPC's **Panduleni Itula** 28%. In the National Assembly election, approximately 66.4% of voters have been counted and SWAPO has achieved 56.38% and the IPC 19.23%.¹ Voter turnout thus far seems to be approximately 73%. Nearly 1.5 million voters were registered.

The major issues voters prioritised were high unemployment, especially among the youth, inadequate water supply, and widespread corruption.² Most parties leading up to the election campaigned on improving housing, creating unemployment, and increasing government transparency.

Regionally, southern Africa's incumbent political parties in **South Africa** and **Botswana** lost their majority vote in 2024. These former liberation movements lost favour with the country's respective electorates leaving the **African National Congress (ANC)** and the **Botswana Democratic Party (BDP)** with the minority vote. If this regional trend is considered together with SWAPO's significant electoral decline since 2014 in national and local elections, this was one of the most contested elections in Namibia's history. However, SWAPO seems to be one of the few incumbent political parties in southern Africa to retain its majority alongside **Zimbabwe's ZANU-PF** and **Mozambique's Frelimo**. However, both ZANU-PF and Frelimo have serious allegations against them of election fraud.

One of the biggest reasons for SWAPO's victory is the lack of organised opposition political parties. Although there are numerous parties competing in Namibia's election, political parties are not viewed as different enough from SWAPO – in fact, many opposition candidates initially started their political career in SWAPO, including Itula. The support for Nandi-Ndaitwah may also come from her distance from SWAPO's corruption scandals, including the **Fishrot**³ scandal

¹ www.Namvotes24.site

² Okay Africa, 22 Nov 2024

³ The Fishrot scandal exposed how **Icelandic** company **Samherji** paid high ranking officials and politicians in Namibia to win Namibia's fishing quota

in which she has never been implicated. While Nandi-Ndaitwah has the lead, the results are not official, and counting is ongoing. Should Nandi-Ndaitwah not secure 50% of the vote, there will be a runoff between her and Itula. However, even if this were to occur, she is still expected to win.

Voting irregularities flagged

Opposition political parties have called on the **Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN)** to stop the vote counting process on account of unprofessional conduct.⁴ Opposition parties have alleged that voters were forced to wait hours outside of voting stations, that there were shortages of ballot papers, that some voting stations were forced to open later due to a lack of election materials; and that many voters had to wait through the night into the next day to cast their vote due to technical difficulties such as the overheating of tablets to verify voters.⁵

The ECN announced on 29 November that it would extend the elections in some areas until Saturday 30 November to relieve pressure caused by technical difficulties.⁶ ECN chairperson **Elsie Nghikembua** stated that the extension for 36 voting stations comes after a shortage of ballot papers at some voting stations and technical issues caused by “*human factors*”.⁷

President **Nangolo Mbumba** (2024-present) approved the election extension and defended the ECN by saying that its job is bigger than any one institution.⁸ However, Mbumba is facing backlash from his approval of the election extension. Namibian lawyer **Henry Shimutwikeni** claims that the president’s proclamation to extend the election is odd and reinforces public beliefs that the ECN is not capable of running a credible election.⁹ Shimutwikeni further argues that just because the president approved the extension of the election does not necessarily make it lawful.

Opposition political parties have also already confirmed that they will challenge the election results. IPC’s lawyers sent a letter to the ECN on 28 November accusing the ECN of denying a voter’s constitutional right to vote and the party has said it will not recognise the results of the election. Another official opposition party, the **Popular Democratic Movement’s (PDM)** leader **McHenry Venaai** also questioned whether the ECN is in collusion with SWAPO.¹⁰ Venaai supports his allegation by saying that the shortage of ballot papers is a systematic attempt to suppress voters and voter’s interests.

It seems like the ECN was administratively overwhelmed leading to ballot paper shortages and long queues outside voting stations. The ECN also announced on 2 December that there are no funds available in the budget to call for re-elections. Therefore, the ECN said it is doing everything in its capacity to ensure the vote counting is as accurate as possible.¹¹ No dishonesty by SWAPO has been confirmed or proved, a notion supported by the **African Union Election Observation Mission (AUEOM)**. The AUEOM has issued a statement noting that apart from technical incidents, the Namibian elections happened in accordance with the **Electoral Act** and remarked that the election took place in a peaceful and complacent environment.¹²

Issues with the South African Customs Union

⁴ News24, 28 Nov 2024

⁵ Daily Maverick, 28 Nov 2024

⁶ Daily Maverick, 29 Nov 2024

⁷ The Namibian, 29 Nov 2024

⁸ The Namibian, 29 Nov 2024

⁹ Daily Maverick, 29 Nov 2024

¹⁰ Daily Maverick, 28 Nov 2024

¹¹ The Namibian, 2 Dec 2024

¹² [African Union](#), 29 Nov 2024

Industrialisation and trade minister **Lucia Iipumbu** announced on 29 November that the country is actively trying to diversify its export base to stimulate economic growth by participating in various regional and international trade agreements.¹³ Iipumbu highlighted that Namibia forms part of the **Southern African Customs Union (SACU)**, the **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**, and the **Southern African Development Community (SADC)**. Although these trade agreements form an important part of Namibia's economic growth levers, SACU is facing challenges which are hindering Namibia's growth.

In the mid-term budget speech, it was noted that volatile regional economic trends led to a decrease in Namibia's revenue collection from SACU (*see ARC Briefing Namibia Nov 2024*). This is further supported by Iipumbu who argued that the four smaller countries in SACU, namely **Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, and Eswatini (BLNE)**, are concerned that they are not getting a fair share of the customs union's revenue.¹⁴ South Africa with its big economy dominates SACU - as of 2023 South Africa accounts for over 90% of the economic activity within SACU.¹⁵

In recent years there have also been tension within the block regarding differing policies. Iipumbu noted that BLNE economies are dominated by South Africa, the BLNE country's industrial and agricultural developments are strongly influenced by the South African economy and its fluctuations. In turn, this led to the tensions when Namibia and Botswana banned the import of South African citrus and vegetables until 2025, arguing that they want to be more self-sufficient, and are too reliant on South African agricultural imports. The banning of exports goes directly going against the initiative of SACU.¹⁶

Namibia is still enjoying benefits from being part of SACU and in 2023/24, SACU accounted for 33% of Namibia's customs revenue.¹⁷ **National Agricultural Marketing Council** senior agricultural economist **Thabile Nkunjana** further argued that although South Africa dominates the block, the BLNE countries are reliant on South Africa's markets for its exports.¹⁸ Furthermore, South Africa has a highly mechanised agricultural sector which is altogether bigger than the agricultural sectors of the BLNE countries, making it unreasonable to assume that all members of SACU will have the same market share.

Namibia experiences both positives and negatives by being part of SACU. However, with a balanced approach between the pros and cons the country can utilise these trade agreements to spur economic growth.

NamWater announces appointment of monitoring consultants

Namibia Water Corporation (NamWater) announced on 29 November that in collaboration with the agriculture, water and land reform ministry it appointed **German** monitoring consultant **GKW Consult GmbH** and local engineering company, **Burmeister & Partners Consulting Engineers**, to oversee the implementation of the **Water Sector Support Programme 1 (WSSP 1)**.¹⁹ The WSSP is part of the **Namibia Water Sector Support Program (NWSSP)**, a programme introduced by the government to address the water crisis in the country.²⁰

Namibia which is drought-prone country and faced one of its worst droughts in over a century in May 2024 and a national state of emergency declared.²¹ The WSSP 1 is part of an effort the

¹³ Namibia Economist, 29 Nov 2024

¹⁴ Namibia Economist, 29 Nov 2024

¹⁵ ODI Global, 9 May 2023

¹⁶ Fresh Plaza, 29 Nov 2024

¹⁷ ODI Global, 9 May 2023

¹⁸ News24, 13 Aug 2024

¹⁹ Namibia Economist, 29 Nov 2024

²⁰ African Development Bank Group, 26 Nov 2024

²¹ News24, 27 Jun 2024

increase access to a sustainable water supply and falls under a six-year timeline focused on building water infrastructure, wastewater treatment, rural water supply, and bolster institutional capacity building.²²

GKW Consult GmbH and Burmeister & Partners Consulting Engineers will have the responsibilities of implementation support of WSSP 1, procurement support and monitoring of the programme.²³ The total costs of the contract are €2.25m(\$2.38m) for main services, and €103,000 (\$108,933) for optional services. The contract stretches over the six-year period or 72 months.

This is an important development as it demonstrates the government seriousness about addressing its water shortages and is currently on track to reach the implementation deadline. Additionally, in early November 2024, NamWater also took another significant step to ensure WSSP 1 gets implemented by signing the construction contracts of the **Ogongo-Oshakati Pipeline Replacement and Ancillary Works**.²⁴ This project is aimed to replace aging pipelines which will enhance water delivery capacity and in turn support the WSSP 1 project.

The government's push to implement not only the WSSP 1 but also the broader NWSSP, is a positive sign for foreign investment. Especially in consideration of how GKW Consult GmbH is a German based firm, and in the *ARC Briefing Namibia November 2024* how Coca-Cola invested \$50 million into its Windhoek plant.

Outlook 2025

With the highly likely victory of SWAPO, Namibia is set to see more of the same in 2025. In SWAPO's election campaigning neither the party nor **Nandi-Ndaitwah** announced any radical change from current SWAPO policies. Therefore, policy-wise Namibia is likely to see a continuation of the previous government with minor policy changes. Until the election results are finalised the highest political risk Namibia is facing is severe pushback from opposition political parties, especially parties like the **Independent Patriots for Change (IPC)** and **Popular Democratic Movement (PDM)** which says they will not accept the election results. From the electorate there were no reported unrest or political violence since 27 November until the time of writing, 2 December. Therefore, there is a low risk of political violence from Namibian citizens in regard to the election outcome.

Economically, there seems to be no dramatic movement in Namibia's oil and gas sector. However, the Namibian government has been pushing for foreign investment into its oil and gas sector. At COP29 in Azerbaijan's capital of Baku the state-run **Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board** organised side events to bring focus to how Namibia can produce the most sustainable barrel of crude oil.²⁵ Additionally the Namibian government also had a pavilion displayed to advocate for the country's oil and gas sector. Therefore, the Namibian government is likely to continue to advocate for the oil and gas sector and to attract foreign investment for the sector in 2025.

Planner

23 – 25 Apr 2025 **Windhoek (Namibia) Namibia International Energy Conference**

12 – 15 Aug 2025 **Windhoek (Namibia) Namibia Oil and Gas Conference 2025**

Chronology

²² Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) Report, October 2019

²³ Namibia Economist, 29 Nov 2024

²⁴ Namibia Economist, 11 Nov 2024

²⁵ Climate Home News, 22 Nov 2024

28 Nov 2024 **Windhoek (Namibia)** *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. International relations and cooperation minister **Peya Mushelenga** received the Ambassador for the State of **Palestine** to Namibia, **Hanan Jarrar** for a courtesy call to re-affirm Namibia's stance on the plight of Palestine;

28 Nov 2024 **Windhoek (Namibia)** *The Namibian*. Acting high court judge **Moses Chinhengo** releases a statement saying the four accused met in the **Fishrot** trial have had enough time to secure a lawyer and the trial must continue after pleas are completed on 10 December;

28 Nov 2024 **Windhoek (Namibia)** *The Namibian*. The **Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia (Cran)** accuses **United States**-headquartered **Space Exploration Technologies** (also known as SpaceX) of operating illegally in Namibia without the proper telecommunications licences required;

26 Nov 2024 **Windhoek (Namibia)** *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. **Department for Multilateral Relations and Cooperation** deputy executive director **Jerobeam Shaanika** receives the **Electoral Observation Mission of the African Centre for Governance** head of mission **Tshepo John Monethi** for a courtesy call in their support of the elections and democratic process in Namibia;

22 Nov 2024 **Windhoek (Namibia)** *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. International relations and cooperation ministry releases a statement welcoming the **International Criminal Court**'s decision to issue an arrest warrant for **Israeli** prime minister **Benjamin Netanyahu (2022-present)**;

20 Nov 2024 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. International relations and cooperation minister **Peya Mushelenga** attends the Extraordinary Summit of the **Southern African Development Community (SADC)** Heads of State and Government, highlighting possible diplomatic efforts to address the security challenges in the region;

19 Nov 2024 **Windhoek (Namibia)** *Bank of Namibia*. The **Bank of Namibia (BoN)** (central bank) for the first time issues a clear regulatory guidance for investors looking to establish microfinance banking institutions;

18 Nov 2024. **Windhoek (Namibia)** *Bank of Namibia*. The **Bank of Namibia (BoN)** (central bank) hosts the quarterly meeting of the **Common Monetary Area (CMA) Central Bank Governors**, which includes the central bank governors of the **South African Reserve Bank, Central Bank of Lesotho**, and the **Central Bank of Eswatini**, to discuss regional economic issues;

18 Nov 2024 **Harare (Zimbabwe)** *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. International relations and cooperation minister **Peya Mushelenga** participates in the **Southern African Development Community (SADC)** Extraordinary Meeting of the Council of Ministers to discuss the security situation in the SADC region;

10 Nov 2024 **Sochi (Russia)** *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. International relations and cooperation minister **Peya Mushelenga** participated in the Opening Ceremony and Plenary Session of the **Africa-Russia Ministerial Forum**;

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