



PROFILE

MONICA GEINGOS, FIRST LADY OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

Monica Geingos is a qualified lawyer with over 20 years of experience in the financial sector, with senior roles in capital markets, corporate finance, and private equity. She was awarded National Honours (Most Distinguished Order of Namibia), by Former President Pohamba, for her “outstanding contribution to the socio-economic development of Namibia.” She was inducted into the Namibian Business Hall of Fame and received numerous awards, such as the “Namibian Business Personality of the Year” and “Most Innovative Entrepreneur”. During her time in the private sector, Monica was regularly rated by local and continental media publications as one of the most influential Namibians and recognised by international media as one of “Africa’s Top 100 Economic Leaders”.

Before assuming the First Lady role in 2015, she was a co-shareholder and Managing Director of Namibia’s largest private equity fund for over a decade. During this time, she served on the Boards of large public and private sector companies as either Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson.

Due to her extensive corporate experience, she was a long-standing member of high-level policy advisory Boards - such as the President’s Economic Advisory Council, the governing Party’s Think Tank, and the National Council of the Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry - with the mandate to advise on national policy formulation and implementation.

She also made time to serve on Boards such as the Association of Unlisted Investment Managers (Chairperson), the Steering Committee for the Namibian Financial Sector Charter (Secretary), the Listings Advisory Board of the Namibian Stock Exchange, and the Public Office Bearers Commission (Vice-Chairperson).

Given her business interests, Monica transitioned into her role as First Lady with the advice of PriceWaterhouseCoopers (“PWC”). PWC was mandated to assess her business interests for conflicts of interest and prepare her assets for public disclosure. As Namibian legislation does not require the First Lady to disclose her business interests, this process was self-initiated and voluntary. Despite no conflict of interest, PWC identified the need to address the perception of conflict of interest. In response, Monica resolved not to entertain any new business interests, disposed of substantial investment assets and resigned from numerous boards. She also utilizes a decision tree, based on global best practices, to assess her ongoing involvement in her sole remaining business interest.

As First Lady, Mrs Geingos has combined her high-level corporate expertise with President Geingob’s war on poverty and inequality. Through the One Economy Foundation, the First Lady has initiated numerous programs that focus on sustainably lifting vulnerable populations out of poverty traps. In this regard, a flagship project, the #BeFreeMovement, occupies most of her time. This youth-driven program facilitates a non-judgmental platform for adolescents and young adults to freely discuss their challenges while assisting them with access to information and appropriate services. Mrs Geingos is currently overseeing the institutionalisation of #BeFree key learnings into Project #BeFree by constructing an inclusive one-stop youth Centre of excellence. Project Be Free intends to provide a continuum of holistic services, including life skills programs, mental health support, the full spectrum of adolescent-friendly sexual and reproductive health services (including comprehensive sexuality education), skills and leadership development, entrepreneurship development and adolescent-friendly edutainment. In addition, project #BeFree has entered several smart

partnerships in the public, private, and non-profit space to ensure that the Project closes the mental health and SRH service delivery gaps experienced by young people.

Her office also focuses on:

- the Break Free Anti Violence campaign (fights against Gender-Based Violence);
- One Nation Fund (provides micro-entrepreneurs with responsible and sustainable access to collateral and interest-free loans, entrepreneurial training, and mentorship);
- Talented Individual Programme (academic fellowship which provides talented children from low-income families access to quality education while providing them with the full spectrum of clinical and psychosocial support).

In terms of current obligations, Mrs Geingos is the Patron of both the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia. She accepted the naming of a school, “Monica Geingos Junior Secondary School”, and a “Monica Geingos” street, as both were in peri-urban areas and were so named to recognise her active role in advocating for a pro-poor policy environment in the advancement of equal education and decent shelter.

Regarding her international obligations, Mrs Geingos is the Chairperson of the Africa REACH Leadership Council, an initiative to create a new action agenda around ending AIDS in children and youth in Africa. She further serves as a director of the following entities; the Oxford African Studies Centre International Advisory Board; the Monrovia-based Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Presidential Center for Women and Development; the Hamburg-based Ohhh! Foundation Advisory Board; and is a Co-Patron of the Nairobi-based PLO Lumumba Foundation Africa Mentorship Programme. She is also a Leadership Council member of Concordia, a New-York based non-profit which builds global partnerships for social impact. Concordia draws its leadership from former government leaders, policy experts, and industry leaders. Mrs Geingos is also the incumbent President of the Organisation of African First Ladies for Development (OAFLAD).

Mrs. Geingos is committed to utilizing her institutional and strategic experience in the public and private sectors in Africa to influence institutional change and support women and young people on their leadership paths.

Since becoming First Lady, Mrs Geingos has added to the numerous merit awards she obtained during her professional career. She is the UNAIDS Special Advocate for Young Women and Adolescent Girls and a recipient of the “Change the World Award” from the Professional Speakers Association. She was honoured with the international “World Without Aids” Award for her advocacy work in the fight against AIDS. She was awarded the annual Concordia Leadership Award for her global leadership and “unique and powerful efforts to lead the way for health and socio-economic empowerment.” Various international organisations and publications have ranked Mrs Geingos as one of the “100 Most Reputable Africans” and one of the “100 Most Influential African Women”. Mrs Geingos is a recognised leader whose forthright speaking manner has made her a sought-after speaker, featured in prominent global publications and international news networks.