**Speech by H.E. Mrs. Jo Lomas, British High Commissioner to Namibia**

**on the occasion of the Queen’s Birthday Party, on 15 June**

**British High Commissioner’s Residence**

**Check upon delivery!**

Hon Dep Minister, Maureen Hinda

(Ministers/Deputy Ministers present)

Your Excellencies

Distinguished Guests and Friends, and media

Fellow Brits

I ‘m delighted to host my first Queen’s Birthday Party in Namibia. My husband Chris, our daughter and I arrived in Namibia last September. We have already driven 16000 KM exploring this beautiful country for both work and pleasure. This has really helped open our eyes to both the challenges and opportunities present here.

What has really impressed me about Namibia is the determination from the President down to pull together to address poverty and inequality. Here at the BHC we are determined to support Namibia’s objectives through economic growth. My priority is to find areas where British expertise and investment can do just that.

Now we are here today to celebrate two GREAT British institutions - The British monarchy and the work of William Shakespeare.

Her Majesty of course takes precedence and this weekend you might have seen the pictures from the UK of thousands of people celebrating her 90th birthday. She is the UK’s longest serving monarch and for over 64 years she has completed her duties with utmost professionalism, discretion and I must say, great patience! She has travelled over 1 million miles to 117 countries, many of them in Africa. In fact her first overseas tour was to southern Africa in 1947 and famously she was in Kenya when she found out her father George VI had died and that she was now Queen. And of course she visited Namibia shortly after independence in 1991. I’m sure you will all join me in wishing Her Majesty a Happy Birthday.

This year we also commemorate 400 years since the death of William Shakespeare, the greatest living playwright of all time. His works have been translated into over 100 languages and studied by half the world’s schoolchildren.

Three thousand new words and phrases all first appeared in Shakespeare’s plays. Words like “addiction” and “leapfrog” plus phrases like “band of brothers” and “heart of gold” all appeared for the first time in his plays.

The thing about Shakespeare is that his words are still so relevant today. When Nelson Mandela was a prisoner on Robben Island he had a favourite Shakespeare quote which was from Julius Caesar. It reads, “Cowards die many times before their death, the valiant never taste of death but once.”

On this subject of Shakespeare remaining relevant today, we thought we should try to prove it. So we gave a local school, St Paul’s College, the challenge of adapting the Romeo and Juliet balcony scene. Imagine if you will - its 2016 and Juliet, a rather popular young lady, is at her hair salon, trying to decide which Romeo is to her liking....

PLAY PERFORMED BY ST PAUL’S

Thank you so much to St Paul’s school (Rusta, Othello, Elton, Jacques and Gloria). A few more “Thank Yous” if I may. To our sponsors and members of the British Business Group - Shell, Tullow Kudu Ltd and ATI Holidays  - who have contributed to our catering today, and the Novel  Motor Company. You can see the latest Jaguar F Type (Sport edition) on the drive way today. Unfortunately it’s not mine. Thanks also to Mr Charles Tait who has sponsored our wonderful piper.

To my staff here at the BHC. We’re a very small post but they have gone from delivering a very successful visit by our Minister for Africa last week to organising this wonderful garden party today. None of this would be possible without their hard work.

Now I would like to invite our guest, The Hon Dep Minister to join me for the toast to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and His Excellency President Hage Geingob - and the Government and people of our two great nations

TOAST - **The Queen and The President of Namibia**

Our honoured guest, Hon Deputy Minister Maureen Hinda, will now say a few words.

SPEECH BY DEPUTY MINISTER

Thank you everybody. If you wait just two minutes you can taste another GREAT British institution – fish and chips!!