



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR NEVILLE GERTZE ON AGENDA ITEM 68: PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

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Chairperson

Namibia associates itself with the statements delivered by Ecuador, on behalf of G77 and China, Egypt on behalf of the African Group and South Africa on behalf of SADC.

Chairperson

Namibia is a youthful country and the welfare of our children is at the center of government policy. We remain committed to making sure children in Namibia enjoy all their rights and that government is at the forefront on delivery of services for the attainment and enjoyment of those rights.

Since 2015, government provides free primary and secondary school education to all children and this has led to an uptick in enrolment rates. The Education for All Act (2002 – 2015) has allowed us to achieve some of our key educational objectives. The Act contributed to improved enrolment at the primary level, exceeding 98 percent for both girls and boys, with a 95 percent survival rate to the last grade of primary education and gender parity at all levels. We are particularly proud of this statistic as it also shows Namibia's commitment to the Girl Child, an issue of importance to us as a co-sponsors of the SADC resolution on the Girl Child.

The Secretary General's report on the Girl Child clearly outlines the importance of girl's access to education. To quote "*the transformational impact of the education of girls on themselves, their families, community and society, including household incomes and the wider economy, is clear. Educated girls acquire more and better-paid work. An extra year of primary school increases girls' eventual wages by 10-20 per cent, and an extra year of secondary school increases wages by 15-25 per cent*". We know girls still lag behind in accessing education as compared to boys in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, and that efforts still need to be increased to make sure parity is reached.

Chairperson,

A clear challenge to the welfare of children in a poverty and drought/flood stricken country like Namibia remains child hunger and malnutrition. Through the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, government has enacted several projects to eliminate hunger and improve health and nutrition for school-going children. The School Feeding Programme is one of our most efficient food-based social safety nets, providing mid-morning meals to nearly 330,000 learners countrywide. This program has significantly contributed to improved access, attendance, and retention and in reducing dropout rates among school-age children. While government bears primary responsibility for the school feeding programs, partnerships provide the best sustainability for these programs to work. UN agencies such as UNICEF, WFP, international and bilateral partners and private companies all have their part to play in assisting government meet its targets regarding the school feeding programs.

Another innovative idea government is looking at is the possibility of linking school feeding to smallholding farmers to enable them to have increased incomes and improved food security and

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nutrition. By procuring from smallholder producers, the school feeding program will guarantee a stable market for these farmers.

Chairperson,

Children's wellbeing are threatened by new forms of sale and exploitation, such as digital commercial sex exploitation, prostitution and child labor, and the risk of these scourges are increasing to all children around the world. We need to develop clear and comprehensive legal frameworks to ensure that children are protected from all types of exploitation. Thus, it is imperative of the international community to exalt efforts to promote an empowering, inclusive and safe digital agenda for children, and develop comprehensive strategies which address the opportunities and the risks that new technologies present for children. Namibia is currently working on the bill on Electronic Transaction and Cyber Crimes Bill, which will allow for national and international prosecution of online child pornography, among other things.

Chairperson,

Namibia's First Lady, Madam Monica Geingos believes that part of the challenges children and young people have, is that they are not able to speak freely and without judgement on issues that affect them. In her role as UNAIDS Special Advocate for Young Women and Adolescent Girls, Madame Geingos champions the Start Free, Stay Free--AIDS Free campaign, the super-track framework for ending AIDS among children, adolescents and young women by 2020. Throughout her campaign in this role, she realised that young people around her are not interested in HIV as a standalone issue, thus the need to broaden the conversation to focus on all the issues affecting adolescents. She reminds us also of the importance of the role of the family and that open and genuine dialogue in the family must be encouraged and supported.

Chairperson,

Namibia will continue to advocate for the rights of the child, and in particular the rights of the Girl Child. We should not merely use the refrain that children are the future without actually putting policies and actions in place to make sure that children enjoy their full rights as accorded to them through the international instruments on rights of children that we are party to. In this regard, Namibia looks forward to working with all delegations on the SADC Resolution „The Girl Child“ this year, in order to discuss how to make substantial changes for the girl child's wellbeing.

I thank you,