



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR NEVILLE GERTZE ON AGENDA ITEM 69: RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

12 OCTOBER 2017

NEW YORK
(Check Against Delivery)

Chairperson

Our constitution guarantees fundamental rights and freedom to all Namibians without discrimination on any ground. Our historic past of ethnic segregation and racial discrimination left Namibia with stark inequalities among communities, of which some were severely marginalized. To remedy that the government of Namibia put up development plans and programs aimed at bringing about development and prosperity for all Namibians, including those formally marginalized. These programs further aim at tackling poverty in order to put the country on a trajectory to prosperity

Chairperson,

Namibia is an active participant in the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, where we advocate for the rights of communities who are marginalized. In 2015, President Hage Geingob elevated the head of the division for Marginalized Communities to a Deputy Minister under the Presidency, in order to give due regard and resources to this office. The division is the primary responsibility bearer to implement various programs and activities for the enjoyment of all rights by these communities who often live in rural and communal areas.

The cornerstone of government support to marginalized communities is the Education, Resettlement and Livelihood Support program which encompass the areas which government has designated as priority issues. Marginalized communities have some of the highest illiteracy rates, therefore Government has prioritized access to education, as guaranteed in our constitutions, to these communities by building schools, early childhood centers and providing mobile schools in cases where communities are nomadic. All these schools are provided with the feeding programme, which helps in increasing the enrollment and retention rates. Government is also committed to providing marginalized communities with adequate healthcare, water and sanitation.

Chairperson,

Many of Namibia's marginalized communities live in rural areas and on farms where they tend to be small-scale subsistence farmers. Government therefore has been supporting these communities by distributing livestock, supplies of farming equipment and technical support to allow them to thrive on their own. Social safety nets are also

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vital and in Namibia's case, government provides food rations, and for those who qualify, basic income grants.

Chairperson,

Although we have the Ombudsman's office as the custodian of promoting and monitoring government's adherence to implementing human rights instruments, Namibia still has no formal policy guidelines for the implementation of human rights standards regarding marginalized communities. We therefore welcome the United Nation's Department of Economic and Social Affairs' technical support throughout the year as they assist government in coming up with a white paper to guide government's work. The meetings with community and government leaders on this issue have created spaces where Namibians can truly interrogate what it means to be "indigenous" and how we can help in uplifting the livelihood of the most marginalized communities in our country.

Chairperson

Despite the challenges involved, Namibia is determined to exalt efforts aimed at changing the plight of the marginalized communities, in line with our obligations under the International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights, and other relevant international instruments, and in accordance with our Constitution.

I thank you,