



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR NEVILLE
GERTZE ON AGENDA ITEM 28: SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT, THIRD COMMITTEE**

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Mr. Chairperson,

Allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. Chairperson, and the other members of the Bureau on your election to this committee, and I assure you of my delegation's full support in the coming weeks and months.

My delegation appreciates the timely reports submitted under this agenda item, and we would like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary General and will strive to base all our discussions on the information they contain.

Namibia aligns itself with the statements delivered by Egypt on behalf of the African Group, as well as the statement delivered by Ecuador on behalf of G-77 and China.

Mr. Chairperson,

On Social Development, Namibia is taking its cue from the African Union's theme of the year 2017, which is "*Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth* and in that regard, we welcome the partnership between the Chair of the African Union Commission and the UN Secretary General to cooperate on the implementation of Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030 respectively.

In May this year, President Hage Geingob launched our fifth National Development Plan (2017-2022) which will guide our development agenda over that period. NDP5 is characterized by its inclusive nature, because government consulted with communities in all 14 regions of the country, in order to develop a plan that takes into account the realities on the ground, and the aspirations of all Namibians. One of the four focus areas of the NDP5 is social transformation, which includes human capital development and social development. This pillar demonstrates Government's commitment to harnessing the demographic dividend, and is in line with the African Union theme for 2017. Youth between 16-35 years constitute 37% of our population, and catering to them is at the core of NDP5, in order to nurture a productive country. The demographic dividend requires focused interventions in education, health and housing to reap the benefits, which is why NDP5 calls for increased investments to be channeled into those areas.

Mr. Chairperson,

Namibia continues to prioritize pro-poor policies and the social development sectors continue to receive the largest chunk of the Government budget. For the financial year 2017/2018, 24% of the budget has been allocated to the education ministries,

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in keeping with the focus that creating an educated workforce is the key to unlocking our demographic dividend. The Ministry of Health and Social Services gets the second largest budget allocation. The Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare, a relatively new ministry, has also received a substantial sum of the national budget as it carries out its custodial duties of providing social safety nets and other anti-poverty measures, including the newly increased old-age pension.

Orphans and Vulnerable Children grants are being expanded to all qualifying beneficiaries, with the Ministry working to ensure that those in remote areas access those grants. Government aims to keep the vulnerable above the poverty line and protect them from the effects of inflation. The global economic downturn has severely impacted Namibia's economy, however, this necessitated a review of our previous strategies of rolling out safety nets, and devising alternative models of delivering social safety nets in cost effective ways.

Mr. Chairperson,

In March this year, Namibia welcomed the visit of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, **Ms. Rosa Kornfeld-Matte**. We take note of her report, particularly the recommendations that have been made to government, and we are hopeful that the next time the Independent Expert visits Namibia, there will be noticeable changes in the welfare of older persons in Namibia. There is no guiding policy framework to deal with older persons' issues, even though the number of older persons is growing in Namibia. Hence Government, through the Ministry of Health and Social Services, has embarked on a consultative process with the view to formulating a national framework, and more importantly, a process that will involve older persons.

Mr. Chairperson,

Namibia calls for concerted efforts on the part of the global community to embrace a stronger culture of solidarity and caring to relieve the plight of those living in poverty, terror and unspeakable misery. What the world needs now is compassion, understanding and celebration of our diversity at all levels. Let us commit to instill the values of tolerance, respect and human dignity, starting in our families and spreading it to the world at large.

I thank you,