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**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**H.E. MR. NEVILLE GERTZE**

**AMBASSADOR & PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE**

**BEFORE**

**THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE  
74<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**ON**

**AGENDA ITEM 25: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

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**Mr. Chairperson,**

Allow me at the onset to congratulate you on your Chairmanship, and are confident you will ably steer the work of this Committee.

Namibia aligns itself with the statements delivered by Zambia on behalf of the African Group, and by the State of Palestine on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. We would like to add the following in our national capacity:

Namibia welcomes the Secretary General's reports under this agenda and would like to commend their extensiveness. We are particularly looking forward to this year's flagship report on "World Social Situation 2019: Shaping the Future of Inequality" and understanding where the world is in terms of inequality.

For Namibia, like many other countries in our region, inequality persists, especially income inequality. However, Government has enacted several laws, policies and programmes that have decreased inequalities. Among those has been the policy to make basic needs accessible to everyone, including free education and nearly free access to healthcare. "Education is the greatest equalizer" and Namibia has ventured to provide primary and secondary education for free. This of course has to be coupled with quality teachers and other resources, and the Government has made efforts in ensuring that these resources are distributed evenly to all, independent of rural or urban settings. This effort is key to addressing the root causes of inequality, and promotes access to greater opportunities as it increases chances of full employment and decent work.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

Namibia has also made provision of quality health care a priority and this is reflected in the large allocation of the national budget to the health ministry. This has yielded results such as Namibia reaching, and surpassing the UNAIDS 90-90-90 targets on HIV/AIDS well ahead of the deadline of 2020. Concerted political will and adequate resources have been crucial in achieving this target. Support from partners such as UNAIDS and the Global Fund and the international community has also been vital in reaching this milestone. We now aim to completely eradicate mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

As the Secretary General's note points out, climate change is an engine of growing poverty and inequality. In Namibia, similar to other countries in SADC, we continue to experience adverse climate events including a severe drought that has led to loss of crops, livestock, and livelihood. This had been especially devastating because a majority of our communities live in rural areas and are dependent on agriculture. Our disaster risk management policies have been put to the greatest test, and government has had to be innovative in providing relief for those most affected. Government has responded by providing food and other essentials, providing animal feed and educating communities on resilience to climate change. The international community has also stepped in to provide food, finances, expertise and other resources, and Namibia remains grateful for such aid.

As SADC Chairperson for 2018-2019, Namibia was also responsible for coordinating humanitarian appeals for Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi in response to the devastating hurricanes that hit their countries this year. As our region continues to suffer from these climate related disasters, SADC has embarked on programmes to support its Member States in improving their disaster risk management strategies.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

Lastly, let me briefly touch on the importance of universal access to social protection, which my government priorities. Namibia has a variety of legislations that provide for social protection in the country, notably our Constitution which enshrines the obligation of the State to actively promote and maintain the welfare of citizens by adopting policies aimed at ensuring social benefits for the vulnerable members of society. This has culminated in Namibia having one of the most comprehensive social protection systems on the continent.

I have already outlined the necessity of education and health care. In addition to those, Namibia also gives out various grants to those most in need, including old-age pensions, child benefits, and disability grants. These have been proven to reduce poverty and contribute to the upward mobility of families and communities. Social protection for vulnerable groups has further been complemented by affirmative action aimed at improving the situation of those previously disadvantaged.

While Namibia has recorded these and other achievements, there is still much to be done towards the development of robust socio-economic infrastructure, and we as a

country remain committed to the targets set out in our national development plans as well as the sustainable development goals.