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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 69: RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS  
PEOPLES**

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**NEW YORK**  
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**Mr. Chairperson,**

Namibia welcomes the report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the recommendations therein.

In order to achieve the vision “*One Namibia – One Nation*”, the Government of Namibia is committed to strengthening its efforts ensure the participation of indigenous people and the reinforcement of sentiments of inclusion in all spheres, necessary to ensure the healthy functioning of a Namibian society.

To this effect, the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia recognizes customary law as valid, in as far as it does not conflict with the Constitution. Further, Namibian legislation also provides for the establishment of traditional authorities, which are tasked with administering customary laws, and promoting and protecting language, culture and other traditional aspects. These are important elements in giving effect to the rights of marginalized communities. While giving effect to this right is important, it is also important to ensure that traditional authorities have the necessary resources to fully exercise their right. In this regard, in Namibia, recognized traditional authorities qualify to receive funding from the Government to carry out their functions.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

To many indigenous peoples, land is more than an economic commodity. It is used for economic survival, as the basis of a cultural identity, and as a center for spiritual and social well-being of both the individual and the community. The pervasive loss of land and resources by indigenous groups in Namibia during colonialism and apartheid has not been overcome. Access to land and security of tenure remains a challenge for most indigenous people.

In fulfillment of one of the resolutions of the Second National Land Conference of 2018, a Presidential Commission into Claims on Ancestral Land Rights and Restitution was appointed in February 2019. This commission is tasked with coming up with a common understanding and consensus on the definition of ancestral land rights and restitution, the commissioning of a study to identify communities who have lost ancestral land and the establishment of the sizes of ancestral land lost and boundaries.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

The Government of Namibia has recognized the San, Ovaherero, Ovambo and Ovazemba groups as particularly marginalized, indigenous groups that merit special attention and concern. These are communities that live in the most remote areas of Namibia, suffer from extreme poverty, have limited access to education and health facilities amongst others.

In order to ensure the integration of marginalized communities into the mainstream socio-economy, the Government of Namibia has under Vision 2020, National Development 5, and the Harambee Prosperity Plan set out objectives and targets to achieve this. The key output areas under these initiatives are land distribution through communal resettlement programmes, education support through the building of schools and financial support of students from marginalized communities, and finally, livelihood support through the creation of sustainable employment.

**Mr. Chair,**

Uplifting indigenous peoples requires specific measures of affirmative action that are best supported through the creation of a national policies to protect the social, economic and political rights of indigenous communities. We look forward to welcoming the Special Rapporteur to Namibia where we can further discuss these necessary measures to ensure that no one is left behind.

