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STATEMENT

BY

H.E. MR. NEVILLE GERTZE

AMBASSADOR & PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

BEFORE

**THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE
73TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

ON

**AGENDA ITEM 71: RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS
PEOPLES**

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Mr. Chairperson

Under the colonialist apartheid regime, several ethnic groups in Namibia were relegated to so-called 'homelands' which resulted in grave injustices that have left these groups disadvantaged to varying degrees in the present.

Among these ethnic groups, the Namibian Government has recognized the San, Ovaherero, Ovambo and Nama groups as particularly marginalised and to this end, they have been identified in various Namibian laws and policies as groups that merit special attention and concern.

The Namibian Constitution provides a foundational framework for the protection and promotion of the rights of marginalized communities. Further to this, Namibia is a party to a number of conventions and treaties that safeguard the rights of all peoples, including marginalized communities. National legislation has also been enacted in compliance with the obligations set out under these international instruments.

Mr. Chairperson

In Namibia, some of the challenges faced by these marginalised communities include lack of access to land and a lack of secure land tenure, low levels of education, limited access to health services; Food insecurity and insufficient livelihood options.

Education, Resettlement and Livelihood Support programs have thus far been identified as key development components to poverty alleviation amongst these communities. This is done with the ultimate objective of integrating these marginalised communities into the mainstream economy and improving their opportunities to earn a livelihood.

Under the San Development Programme, a series of initiatives designed to do just that have been undertaken. These include the resettlement programme through the purchase of commercial farms by Government, literacy projects, affirmative action measures aimed at providing employment opportunities for marginalised people and the creation and management of conservancies for the benefit of marginalised people.

Mr. Chairperson,

As noted in the Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, Namibia's Traditional Authorities Act allows a traditional community to apply for State recognition of its traditional leadership. This has allowed traditional authorities to become recognized, providing them with the right to administer and execute customary laws, to protect and promote the culture, language, tradition, and traditional values of their communities and to preserve cultural sites, works of art and traditional ceremonies.

Mr. Chairperson,

The rights of marginalized communities and ensuring inclusive development, are important issues that we all need to take seriously so as to reduce any form of marginalisation through a broad-based and coordinated approach involving all stakeholders, including a comprehensive regulatory framework to guide coherence and coordination in redressing the marginalisation of those communities.

I thank you.