



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALBERT BIWA, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF
SOCIAL WELFARE, MINISTRY OF POVERTY ERADICATION AND
SOCIAL WELFARE, GENERAL DISCUSSION 3 A, B**

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(Check Against Delivery)

Strategies for eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development for all

Mr. Chairperson,

Namibia aligns itself with the statement delivered by Egypt on behalf of G77 and China, as well as the statement delivered by Equatorial Guinea on behalf of the African Group.

Since independence in 1990, Namibia has implemented various policies and strategies resulting in significant economic growth and improvements in social development. Nonetheless, poverty remains a challenge with many people facing other adverse conditions such as high levels of unemployment, food insecurity, and inadequate access to basic services such as energy (electricity); water and sanitation; health; and education services especially in rural and very remote areas. In this regard measures should provide people with tools that build resilience and self-sufficiency to break the cycle of poverty. Social safety nets are one of such measures that can help graduate people out of poverty to sustainable livelihoods. This will require adopting a social welfare approach that is human rights based promoting the human rights and dignity of people to have their basic needs met, and achieving social justice.

In this regard Namibia established a Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare in 2015 in order to coordinate the poverty eradication efforts of the government and identify gaps and to make good on these gaps, through the development of effective and workable policy measures. Subsequently, the Ministry developed a National Blue Print for Poverty Eradication which was developed in a consultative manner which included input from all regions of Namibia, civil society, the UN system and our international partners. The Blue Print rests on six pillars which are the strengthening of Social Protection Systems, ending Hunger, Access to Basic Services, Education Training and skills development, employment creation and Gender equality and women empowerment.

Mr. Chairperson,

Each of the strategic priority areas is addressing a specific issue, circumstance or challenge and also targets a specific population group in our collective quest to ensure that no one is left behind, or using the Namibian slogan, “no one should feel left out in the Namibian house”. To this end, the government is contemplating putting in place a single registry system that will enhance coordination and expedite implementation while preventing duplication. Further, the government is a proponent for a rights-based approach to social protection measures inclusive of grants. Currently the government is meting out Old Age grants, Disability grants, children's grants and veterans subventions in the form of cash transfer programs. A Social Security Commission that caters for maternity, sick leave and death benefit inclusive of employees compensation fund is actively functioning. Hence Namibia has satisfied the condition set by ILO for minimum floors of Social Protection as the social safety net program remains the core component of government’s strategy of eradicating poverty, particularly as it relates to the most vulnerable to situations of poverty, that is, the elderly, orphans, and persons with disabilities.

Mr. Chairperson,

Despite our gracious intent and generous efforts the government experience increasing challenges with youth unemployment and with those employed in the informal economy. While the government has put measures in place to curb youth unemployment at times these goals are not achieved due to the state of world economics. The precarious state of employment in the informal sector cannot be overemphasized. It is exactly this state of affairs that make it hard for the government to make strides in securing sufficient social protection for those functioning in the informal economy. Needless to say, government made efforts to commence dialogue with organizations and representatives to find a workable solution in this respect.

While we acknowledge several areas that are in need of poverty eradication measure, as good place to commence poverty eradication measures would be with the youth, to prevent generational transfer of poverty and those in the informal sector in order to break the cycle precarious working environment. Once these two areas are addressed and decent work is secured for the designated groups the process of poverty eradication will already be won halfway. We are

appreciative of the fact that this issue has been placed on the UN agenda and we pray that those governments that are striving to eradicate poverty will receive the requisite international support. We equally pray for a successful session with workable outcomes that would provide new impetus to the individual country programs.

Mr. Chairperson,

Namibia is in full agreement with the Secretary General's recommendation that pro-poor strategies and policies should also be accompanied by effective and inclusive public institutions and the provision of quality services that are inclusive of all segments of society, including people living in poverty, disadvantaged and marginalized groups, and rural and remote areas. In this regard, Namibia has consistently allocated the biggest budget to the education and health sectors, for example providing mobile clinics and mobile schools to our nomadic populations, as well as those in remote areas. Primary and Secondary school is free in Namibia; and to enable children from the poorest backgrounds to stay in school, the in-school meal programs have been proven an effective tool.

As far as acquisition of farming land is concerned, the willing buyer willing seller program is gaining momentum as the state has secured more land that was previously owned by absentee landlords or from land that was disowned through the previous apartheid regimes, and more and more indigenous people are being settled on these farms to make a productive living. Recently the government concluded a mass housing program where low cost houses were built for low and middle income groups. Many displaced families or low income earners could for the first time own a house. In addition, very good strides were made with the nationwide program to bring clean water and sanitation closer to the people, especially those in rural Namibia.

Mr. Chairperson,

In a country where up to 80 per cent of the rural population depends on agriculture for their livelihoods, investments in the agricultural sector are ever more important. Concerted efforts are made in the agricultural sector, where a conducive environment is provided and maintained for livestock auctioning at market related prices which in turn reinforce farming possibilities and encourage a broader spectrum of people to actively participate in the agricultural sector. The Agricultural

bank provides requisite assistance through loans to help prospective farmers overcome the obstacles that deter them from reaching their maximum potential. In communal areas the provision of seeds and assistance with implements served as impetus to enhance crop production that is aimed at food security over the medium and long term, a process that will lead to the eventual abolishment of hunger for food security is surely the clearest sign of poverty eradication.

I thank you,