

Remarks

By

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**National Conference on Wealth Redistribution and Poverty
Eradication**

26-27 October, 2015

Safari Hotel

Windhoek, Namibia

Hon. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Deputy Prime Minister

Hon. Bishop Zephania Kameeta, Minister of Poverty Eradication and
Social Welfare

Hon. Ministers and Members of Parliament

Senior Government Officials

Members of the UN Family

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Members of the private sector and civil society

Media

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First allow me to express sincere gratitude to the Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare (MPESW) for inviting the UN to participate in this National Conference on Poverty Eradication and Inequality; and for the close collaboration we have enjoyed over the last few months.

Two months ago, I addressed the inaugural launch of the national consultative dialogues on wealth redistribution and poverty eradication on behalf of the UN family serving here in Namibia.

During the speech, I assured the Government of the UN support.

I highlighted existing statistics demonstrating the positive trajectory Namibia has followed since Independence, particularly regarding the social services (in education – 99% of children go to school, in health – a 50% reduction in HIV infections, regarding water – 84% access clean water)¹ this gives us hope; and I also highlighted government statistics on inequality that state the Gini coefficient as 0.59%², and that youth unemployment stands at 39%³, and reminded the meeting of the ‘unfinished business’ which brings us here today.

I went on to speak of continental and global best practice, on social protection schemes in Mauritius, Tanzania, Singapore and Brazil, and to recommend south-south cooperation, multisector coordination; and a focus on implementation as possible ways forward.

I mentioned one of the outcomes of the Financing for Development Conference in Ethiopia earlier this year. The conference recognized the challenge that middle-income countries face. They are unable

¹ 2015 Namibia MDG report

² NDP 4

³ 2014 Namibia Labor Force Survey

to mobilize domestic and international capital to meet rising investment needs and compensate for reductions in grants and concessional finance.

At the same launch, the UN system in Namibia assured His Excellency the President that we shared in Vision 2030 and as such, the UN would immediately support, Namibia's war against poverty, and the National Dialogue in all 14 regions.

I am pleased to confirm that since the 14 August meeting, the UN has provided support to a team of Ministry representatives led by the MPESW, in undertaking dialogues in all 14 regions of Namibia.

Discussions included representatives from the 75% of the population under the age of 35⁴, the 27% of the population that is unemployed⁵, and the 29% of the population that is still classified as poor⁶. Also present at the dialogues were people living with disabilities, Traditional Leaders, and minority groups. Discussions centered around young and old, women and men's, ability (or not) to access basic goods and services such as food, water, shelter, electricity, health and education; all essential for people to live in dignity. We listened to suggestions on what could be done to improve their standard of living.

The voices emanating from the various consultations were compelling in their message. People want to have equal access to basic services and be empowered to avoid poverty and hunger.

Excellency's, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

⁴ 2011 Namibia Census

⁵ 2011 Namibia Census

⁶ 2015 Namibia MDG Report

This meeting provides an opportunity to discuss outcomes from the regional dialogue, international best practice and agree on clear actions, to eradicate poverty.

Some proposals will require concrete policy decisions for example expanding social protection schemes, and still others would necessitate a discussion around the macro-economic growth for long term inclusive and sustainable poverty eradication.

Excellency's, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Since the 14 August meeting, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals have been adopted, the United Nations has turned 70, and perhaps most relevant to our discussions over the next two days, His Excellency the President has declared 'war on poverty', in front of all the World's Leaders, during the United Nations General Assembly.

A war by definition requires a major rethink of strategy and tactics. H.E. the President has called on the nation to suggest workable solutions and not just to conduct 'business as usual'.

This calls for rejuvenated efforts.

As part of our contribution, the UN team has met with senior leaders of the MPESW to discuss next steps, identify best practice and sourced international expertise to support the development of government poverty eradication policies and strategies. Some of these experts are here with us today.

We have also consistently messaged that successfully eradicating poverty requires the participation of a cross section of stakeholders

(civil society, private sector operators, faith-based organizations, UN agencies and development partners). Effective coordination structures are therefore crucial for effective results oriented interventions.

Excellency's, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

As such, and on behalf of the UN, I would like to leave you with two additional thoughts as we prepare for our deliberations:

1. If poverty eradication efforts are to be sustainable, a dual track process must be pursued. This should include:
 - Strengthened macro-economic policies that foster sustainable and inclusive economic growth.
 - Social protection systems that are well designed and targeted to attain inclusive coverage to meet people's basic needs; in essence to keep 'people's heads above water' as we wait for the macro-economic policies to take effect. These should also include social safety nets for the poorest and most vulnerable people and mechanisms to promote the development of people's skills as stated in Vision 2030.

2. Some of the impediments to poverty eradication do not require notable policy changes or additional human resources, they simply need strengthened, implementation and monitoring of existing programmes at the sub regional level. Therefore, short term measures that can be implemented immediately should be pursued.

Excellency's, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The recent consultations are a reminder of the need for a people centered approach. The long-term eradication of poverty will also require that the poor are empowered to contribute to the design and implementation of programmes affecting them.

We look forward to the outcomes of this two day meeting and as promised, the UN will use agreements reached to guide its concrete commitments going forward.

We remain as always committed to support the people of Namibia, and the quest to ensure each individual lives a life of dignity.

In conclusion, allow me to quote the preamble to the SDGs:

'we can be the first generation to succeed in ending poverty; just as we may be the last to have a chance of saving the planet'.

Let us make Namibia a leader in this regard!

I thank you for your kind attention.