



**UNITED NATIONS
NAMIBIA**



Remarks

By

Farayi Zimudzi,
FAO Representative to Namibia

on behalf of

Ms. Rachel Odede
UN Resident Coordinator a.i.

For

**The Commemoration of the International
Human Rights Day / Namibian Women's Day**

***Theme: "Orange the World: #HearMeToo - Ending
GBV in the World of Work"***

10 December 2018
J. Stephanus Stadium
Tseiblaagte, Keetmanshoop
//Karas Region

- **Director of Ceremonies;**
- **Hon. Lucia Witbooi, Deputy Minister of Gender Equality and Child Welfare;**
- **Hon. Hilma Nikanor, Deputy Minister of Veterans Affairs;**
- **Hon. Lucia Basson, Governor of //Karas Region;**
- **Mr. R.J. Isaak, the NAMPOL Regional Commander for //Karas;**
- **Mr. Jan Scholtz, Chairperson of the //Karas Management Committee;**
- **Pastor Biwa;**
- **Your Excellencies;**
- **Distinguished invited guests;**
- **Members of the Media;**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great esteem that I deliver remarks on behalf of the UN Resident Coordinator in Namibia a.i., Ms. Rachel Odede.

The UN System in Namibia, your ‘Partner of Choice’, is honoured to join the Government of the Republic of Namibia (GRN) and stakeholders to commemorate International Human Rights Day and Namibian Women’s Day as part of 16 Days of Activism.

This year’s theme, “Orange the World: #HearMeToo - Ending GBV in the World of Work” calls on us to work in partnership to address gender-based violence (GBV), a pervasive issue, disproportionately affecting women and preventing them from enjoying their full human rights.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

70 years ago, the milestone document, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), came to life in 1948. It sets out the fundamental human rights which must be universally protected for all people, founded by the values of equality, justice and human dignity. Thanks to the Declaration and the commitment of its signatories, including Namibia, “the dignity of millions has been uplifted and the foundation for a more just world has been laid”¹.

¹ United Nations. Human Rights Day. <https://bit.ly/19f9uJN>

The 70th Anniversary, being celebrated this year, is a chance for the world to reaffirm the enduring principles and standards this document established. The UDHR empowers us all², and it reminds us that wherever and whenever humanity's values are abandoned, we are all at greater risk³.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have and continue to see the human rights of women being abandoned, especially in the form of violence. It is a complex phenomenon, resulting from unequal power dynamics and persistent social norms, practices and behaviours that discriminate against women.

This pervasive issue extends across communities, regions, countries, continents and the globe. Worldwide:

- Approximately 15 million adolescent girls (aged 15 to 19) have experienced forced sex at some point in their life.⁴
- 1 in 3 women have experienced physical or sexual violence — mostly by an intimate partner.⁵
- “Harmful practices, such as child marriage, steal the childhood of 15 million girls under age 18 every year.”⁶

Violence has numerous, negative consequences on women. Women who have experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence report higher rates of depression, having an abortion and acquiring HIV, compared to women who have not.⁷ Other health consequences include unwanted pregnancies and complications associated with forced or unsafe abortions, disability and psychological trauma.

Exposure to and fear of violence deprives women and girls of their rights--to education, health and decent livelihoods. And this violence extends to the workplace.

² United Nations. Human Rights Day. Messaging. Accessed online: <https://bit.ly/19f9uJN>

³ United Nations. Human Rights Day. Messaging. Accessed online: <https://bit.ly/19f9uJN>

⁴ UNICEF. A Familiar Face: Violence in the lives of children and adolescents. 2017

⁵ World Health Organization. Global and regional estimates of violence against women. 2013

⁶ UN Women. SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. <https://bit.ly/1NLBGuT>

⁷ UN Women. Facts and figures: Ending violence against women. <https://bit.ly/1kBBx01> Sourced from WHO, Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence. <https://bit.ly/2L05oAh>

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Women are multipliers of development and can be powerful agents of change⁸. We have seen this across the globe, with women playing a major role in the shaping the UDHR⁹ as well as leading other human rights movements. Women were also heavily involved in Namibia's liberation struggle, and the heroic deeds of Namibian women are being celebrated today.

Women play a critical role in sustaining economic and social progress and development. However, if they are left behind and face barriers such as gender inequality, poverty, disempowerment and gender-based violence, they cannot fulfil this potential.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) puts achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls at the forefront. Specifically, Goal 5 'Gender Equality' has a target of, "eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation."¹⁰

This includes addressing discrimination, violence and harassment in the workplace, where women are, "particularly exposed to certain types of violence, such as sexual offences."¹¹

Other development agendas also recognize that sustainable development cannot happen without women. This includes the Fifth National Development Plan (NDP 5), the Harambee Prosperity Plan (HPP), Namibia's Vision 2030, and the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The UN System in Namibia, your 'Partner of Choice', renews its commitment to end violence against women and girls. Our partnership framework with the Government of the

⁸ United Nations. Sustainable Development Goals Platform. Decisions by Topic: Gender equality and women's empowerment. <https://bit.ly/1NJ96m>

⁹ United Nations. Human Rights Day. Women who shaped the Universal Declaration. Accessed online: <https://bit.ly/2ASIRSw>

¹⁰ UN Women. "SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". <https://bit.ly/1NLBGuT>

¹¹ World Health Organization (WHO). P.10 <https://bit.ly/2BUZ4HB>

Republic of Namibia, UNPAF¹², is clear – we aim to empower and protect vulnerable women and children from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

The UN will continue to advocate for the rights of women and girls and for gender equality, and we are calling on our partners and the public at large to do the same.

Addressing these issues starts with empowering victims and providing them with safe spaces to share their stories and be heard – and we must listen. Linking with today’s theme of #HearMeToo - we must ensure that we have strong systems in place to provide this platform as well as to further support victims.

Purna Sen, UN Women’s Executive Coordinator and Spokesperson on Sexual Harassment and Other Forms of Discrimination, said earlier this year: “Sexual harassment is one dimension of broader experiences of violence against women, for which perpetrators need to be held fully to account. Impunity for human rights violations permeate rape culture, blame and judge victims for wrongs done to them, and cannot be allowed to continue—including in criminal justice systems.”¹³

The future we want is a world where every woman and girl can live free from discrimination and violence and enjoy her full human rights and dignity. This world is one where victims feel safe coming forward and perpetrators are held accountable. Let’s unite, turn our words into action and stand up for our rights and those of others. Together, we can take action to ensure prosperity for all and that no one behind is left behind.

I thank you.

I will now read the remarks of the UN Secretary General, António Guterres, for the 2018 commemoration of Human Rights Day.¹⁴

For 70 years, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been a global beacon – shining a light for dignity, equality and well-being ... and bringing hope to dark places.

¹² United Nations Partnership Framework (UNPAF) 2019-2023. Social Transformation Pillar, Outcome

¹³ Statement from Purna Sen, UN Women’s Executive Coordinator and Spokesperson on Sexual Harassment and Other Forms of Discrimination <https://bit.ly/2A71JNe>

¹⁴ United Nations. Message by the UN Secretary-General for 2018. <https://bit.ly/1TXCUVk>

The rights proclaimed in the Declaration apply to everyone -- no matter our race, belief, location or other distinction of any kind. Human rights are universal and eternal. They are also indivisible. One cannot pick and choose among civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

Today we also honour the human rights defenders risking their lives to protect people in the face of rising hatred, racism, intolerance and repression. Indeed, human rights are under siege around the world. Universal values are being eroded. The rule of law is being undermined.

Now more than ever, our shared duty is clear: Let us stand up for human rights -- for everyone, everywhere.

Thank you very much.