



**Remarks**

**By**

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Representative**

**At the**

**International Women's Day**

**Tobias Hainyeko Constituency**

**Windhoek,**

**Namibia**

**8 March 2017**

First Lady of the Republic of Namibia, Madame Monica Geingos,  
Minister of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, Hon. Doreen Sioka,  
Hon. Deputy Ministers present here today,  
Hon. Laura McLeod- Katjirua, Governor of Khomas Region  
Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child  
Welfare, Ms. Valencia Uiras,  
Hon. Members of Parliament,  
Hon. Councilors present,  
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,  
Colleagues from the UN family,  
Rev. Maria Kapere, & Representatives from the Council of Churches  
in Namibia (CCN),  
Civil Society Representatives,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Community members,  
Members of the Media  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning,

I would like to begin by thanking the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, for inviting the UN family to be part of Namibia's celebration of International Woman's Day 2017; under the global theme '*Women in the changing world of work: planet 50-50 by 2030.*'

Countries around the world, are clear that we will not reach our development goals (the SDGs); and here in Namibia we are clear we will not win the War on Poverty unless women are fully and safely participating in all aspects of society and the economy.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Namibia's theme for this year's IWD, challenges us to: “**Be Bold for Change**”. And Namibia is a country that has taken progressive decisions in the interest of change.

Namibia has halted and reversed the spread of HIV and is on track to eliminate Mother to Child transmissions by the 2030 deadline. (HIV infections have decreased by 50%<sup>1</sup> over the past 10 years from about 15 000 to 7 400 a year). Namibia has launched the 'Be Free' movement to tackle GBV and teen issues.

From implementing a National Gender Policy and a GBV plan of action<sup>2</sup> to increasing the number of girls in school, we continue to see progressive change.

If we take leadership as another example:

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<sup>1</sup>UNAIDS Global HIV Report, June: 2013

<sup>2</sup> Namibia has a National Gender Policy (2010-2020); and National Gender and GBV Plans of Action (2010-2020; 2012-2016).

- Since last year, Namibia has moved up to 4<sup>th</sup> position in Africa and 12<sup>th</sup> globally, in terms of gender parity in parliament<sup>[2]</sup>
- Women occupy two of the top four leadership positions in government.

and

- Next to Liberia, Namibia has the most Senior African woman in Government; Right Honorable Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila<sup>[3]</sup>

Despite the good news, there are challenges. 1 out of every 3 married women (33% of all married women aged 15-49) has experienced some form of violence from their spouse.<sup>[4]</sup>

Over 10,000 cases of Gender Based Violence (GBV) were registered with the Namibian Police over the past three years, with assault & rape topping the list.<sup>[5]</sup>

There is still work to be done.

So perhaps today the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, the one day a year set aside for women, is a good day to question what we will do as individuals to build on these successes and be 'bold for change'.

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<sup>[2]</sup> <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

<sup>[3]</sup> Worldwide Guide to Women in Leadership; Current Women Leaders  
<http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/Current-Women-Leaders.htm>

<sup>[4]</sup> A total of 28 per cent of women and 22 per cent of men aged 15-49 justified beating as an acceptable way for a husband to discipline his wife.

<sup>[5]</sup> Namibian Police Report, February 2016

How will we ensure that all girls who go to school are free from harmful practices and violence?

How will we ensure that women have; access to decent work and receive equal pay for equal work?

How will we ensure a world free from violence especially intimate partner and sexual violence against women?

So before I read the UN Secretary General's statement, allow me to rededicate the UN, your partner of choice, to continued work with you in empowering women and being 'bold for change in Namibia'!

**Director of ceremonies,**

I will now read the UN Secretary General's statement for this occasion.

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Women's rights are human rights. But in these troubled times, as our world becomes more unpredictable and chaotic, the rights of women and girls are being reduced, restricted and reversed.

Empowering women and girls is the only way to protect their rights and make sure they can realize their full potential.

Historic imbalances in power relations between men and women, exacerbated by growing inequalities within and between societies and countries, are leading to greater discrimination against women and girls. Around the world, tradition, cultural values and religion are being misused to curtail women's rights, to entrench sexism and defend misogynistic practices.

Women's legal rights, which have never been equal to men's on any continent, are being eroded further. Women's rights over their own bodies are questioned and undermined. Women are routinely targeted for intimidation and harassment in cyberspace and in real life. In the worst cases, extremists and terrorists build their ideologies around the subjugation of women and girls and single them out for sexual and gender-based violence, forced marriage and virtual enslavement.

Despite some improvements, leadership positions across the board are still held by men, and the economic gender gap is widening, thanks to outdated attitudes and entrenched male chauvinism. We must change this, by empowering women at all levels, enabling their voices to be heard and giving them control over their own lives and over the future of our world.

Denying the rights of women and girls is not only wrong in itself; it has a serious social and economic impact that holds us all back. Gender equality has a transformative effect that is essential to fully functioning communities, societies and economies.

Women's access to education and health services has benefits for their families and communities that extend to future generations. An extra year in school can add up to 25 per cent to a girl's future income.

When women participate fully in the labour force, it creates opportunities and generates growth. Closing the gender gap in employment could add \$12 trillion to global GDP by 2025. Increasing the proportion of women in public institutions makes them more representative, increases innovation, improves decision-making and benefits whole societies.

Gender equality is central to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the global plan agreed by leaders of all countries to meet the challenges we face. Sustainable Development Goal 5 calls specifically for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and this is central to the achievement of all the 17 SDGs.

I am committed to increasing women's participation in our peace and security work. Women negotiators increase the chances of sustainable peace, and women peacekeepers decrease the chances of sexual exploitation and abuse.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

Within the UN, I am establishing a clear road map with benchmarks to achieve gender parity across the system, so that our Organization truly represents the people we serve. Previous targets have not been met. Now we must move from ambition to action.

On International Women's Day, let us all pledge to do everything we can to overcome entrenched prejudice, support engagement and activism, and promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

I thank you!