



UNITED NATIONS  
NAMIBIA



Remarks  
By

**Ms. Jacqueline Kabambe,**  
*Adolescent and Gender Specialist at UNICEF*

on behalf of

**Ms. Rachel Odede**  
*UN Resident Coordinator and UNICEF  
Representative a.i*

For

**The Launch of the 16 Days of Activism  
Campaign 2018**

***Theme: “End Gender-Based Violence in the  
World of Work”***

23 November 2018  
Opuwo, Kunene Region

- **Director of Ceremonies**
- **Hon. Doreen Sioka, Minister of Gender Equality and Child Welfare;**
- **Hon. Marius Sheya, Governor of Kunene Region**
- **Mr. Salatiel Shinedima, Executive Director of Women’s Action for Development (WAD), on behalf of Civil Society**
- **Lieutenant General. S. Ndeitunga, Inspector General of the Namibian Police; represented by Commissioner James Nderura, Regional Commander for Kunene Region**
- **Adv. Martha Imalwa, Prosecutor–General; represented by Mr. Masendeke, Control Prosecutor of the Opuwo Court**
- **Hon. Cllr. Weich Mupia for Opuwo Urban Constituency**
- **Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps;**
- **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 the Launch of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence (GBV).

This year’s international theme, “Ending Gender-Based Violence in the World of Workplace” calls on each and every one of us to take up hands and work together to address this pervasive issue that extends across communities, regions, borders, institutions and the globe.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Violence against women and girls is a complex phenomenon deeply embedded in unequal power relations between men and women, and persistent social norms, practices and behaviours that discriminate against women at home, in the workplace, and throughout society.

The health consequences of violence are enormous and 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. Specifically,

- Younger women and women who are economically dependent on their male partners have increased vulnerability to intimate partner violence and HIV infection.
- “In some studies, women living with HIV who experienced intimate partner violence were significantly less likely to start or adhere to antiretroviral therapy, and they had worse clinical outcomes than other HIV-positive women”.<sup>1</sup>
- Fear of violence prevents women from negotiating safe sex, seeking voluntary counseling and testing for HIV, returning for their test results, or getting treatment if they are HIV positive or services to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission.

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<sup>1</sup> UNAIDS. Global Aids Update 2018. Miles to Go. <https://bit.ly/2NVQUTO>

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Protecting women and girls from violence and harmful practices is not only a moral and human rights imperative, it is also critical to sustain economic and social progress and development. Women are multipliers of development and can be powerful agents of change<sup>2</sup>. However, they cannot fulfil this potential if they are left behind and face barriers such as gender inequality, poverty, disempowerment and gender-based violence.

National and international development agendas 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.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also 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".<sup>3</sup> This includes work places.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Discrimination against women and girls remains pervasive in every society, and it is one of our greatest obstacles to socio-economic development. That is why, on this day, the UN System in Namibia renews its commitment to support efforts to end violence against women and girls in all spheres. We call on all of our partners to join us in committing to make violence against women and girls a thing of the past

The United Nations Partnership Framework (UNPAF) with the Government of the Republic of Namibia is clear – we aim that by 2023, vulnerable women and children are empowered and protected against violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

During 16 Days of Activism and every day, the UN will continue to provide strong support for the rights of women and girls and for gender equality. 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 human dignity. Let's unite and turn our words into action, ensure prosperity for all and leave no one behind.

## **I thank you.**

I will now read the remarks of the UN Secretary General, António Guterres, on the occasion of the 2018 commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women<sup>4</sup>, the international observance that kicks off 16 Days of Activism.

[...] Violence against women and girls is a global pandemic. It is a moral affront to all women and girls and to us all, a mark of shame on all our societies, and a major obstacle to inclusive, equitable and sustainable development.

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations. Sustainable Development Goals Platform. Decisions by Topic: Gender equality and women's empowerment. <https://bit.ly/1NJ96rm>

<sup>3</sup> UN Women. "SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". <https://bit.ly/1NLBGuT>

<sup>4</sup> United Nations. Secretary-General's remarks on International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women [as delivered]. <https://bit.ly/2qWRjKR>

At its core, violence against women and girls in all its forms is the manifestation of a profound lack of respect – a failure by men to recognize the inherent equality and dignity of women. It is an issue of fundamental human rights.

The violence can take many forms – from domestic violence to trafficking, from sexual violence in conflict to child marriage, genital mutilation and femicide. It is an issue that harms the individual but also has far-reaching consequences for families and for society.

Violence experienced as a child is linked to vulnerability and violence later in life. Other consequences include long-term physical and mental health impacts and costs to individuals and society in services and lost employment days.

This is also a deeply political issue. Violence against women is tied to broader issues of power and control in our societies. We live in a male-dominated world. Women are made vulnerable to violence through the multiple ways in which we keep them unequal.

When family laws which govern inheritance, custody and divorce discriminate against women, or when societies narrow women's access to financial resources and credit, they impede a woman's ability to leave abusive situations. When institutions fail to believe victims, allow impunity, or neglect to put in place policies of protection, they send a strong signal that condones and enables violence.

In the past year we have seen growing attention to one manifestation of this violence. Sexual harassment is experienced by almost all women at some point in their lives. No space is immune. It is rampant across institutions, private and public, including our very own.

This is by no means a new issue, but the increasing public disclosure by women from all regions and all walks of life is bringing the magnitude of the problem to light. This effort to uncover society's shame is also showing the galvanizing power of women's movements to drive the action and awareness needed to eliminate harassment and violence everywhere.

This year, the global United Nations UNiTE campaign to end violence against women and girls is highlighting our support for survivors and advocates under the theme 'Orange the World: #HearMeToo'.

With orange as the unifying colour of solidarity, the #HearMeToo hashtag is designed to send a clear message: violence against women and girls must end now, and we all have a role to play.

We need to do more to support victims and hold perpetrators accountable. But, beyond that, it is imperative that we - as societies - undertake the challenging work of transforming the structures and cultures that allow sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence to happen in the first place.

These include addressing the gender imbalances within our own institutions. This is why we have adopted a UN system-wide gender parity strategy. We have achieved parity in the senior management group and we are well on track to reach gender parity in senior leadership by 2021, and across the board by 2028.

The UN has also reaffirmed its zero-tolerance policy for sexual harassment and assault committed by staff and UN partners. We have recruited specialized investigators on sexual harassment, instituted fast-track procedures for addressing complaints and initiated a 24/7 helpline for victims.

[We] also remain committed to ending all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers and UN staff in the field[...] Nearly 100 Member States that support UN operations on the ground have now signed voluntary compacts with us to tackle the issue, and I call on others to join them[...]<sup>5</sup>

Further afield, we are continuing to invest in life-changing initiatives for millions of women and girls worldwide[...] through the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. This Fund focuses on preventing violence, implementing laws and policies and improving access to vital services for survivors[...]<sup>6</sup>

The UN is also working to deliver on a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder, innovative initiative [the Spotlight Initiative] to end all forms of violence against women and girls by 2030, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>7</sup>

[We are experiencing] a global movement in which we must play a role. It is that global movement that we celebrate today, as we look forward to the coming 16 days devoted to ending gender-based violence. Not until the half of our population represented by women and girls can live free of fear, violence and everyday insecurity, can we truly say we live in a fair and equal world.

**Thank you very much.**

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<sup>5</sup> "I also remain committed to ending all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers and UN staff in the field – one of the first initiatives I took when I assumed office. Nearly 100 Member States that support UN operations on the ground have now signed voluntary compacts with us to tackle the issue, and I call on others to join them, fully assuming their responsibilities, in training, but also in ending impunity."

<sup>6</sup> "With more than 460 programmes in 139 countries and territories over the past two decades, the UN Trust Fund is making a difference. In particular, it is investing in women's civil society organizations, one of the most important and effective investments we can make."

<sup>7</sup> The 500-million-euro EU-UN Spotlight Initiative is an important step forward in this direction. As the largest-ever single investment in eradicating violence against women and girls worldwide, this initial contribution will address the rights and needs of women and girls across 25 countries and five regions. It will empower survivors and advocates to share their stories and become agents of change in their homes, communities and countries. A significant portion of the Spotlight's initial investment will also go to civil society actors, including those that are reaching people often neglected by traditional aid efforts. But even though this initial investment is significant, it is small given the scale of the need. It should be seen as seed funding for a global movement in which we must play a role.