



Introductory Remarks

By

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BLNSS MICs Experience Sharing Forum

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Strand Hotel

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Hon. Obeth Kandjoze, Minister of Economic Planning and Director General of the National Planning Commission – Namibia;

Hon. Cleophas Mutjavikua, Governor of Erongo Region – our host;

Mr. Bertram Stewart, Principal Secretary – Ministry of Economic Planning and Development – Swaziland;

Mr. Kelapile Ndobano, Deputy Secretary of Macro Economic Policy – Ministry of Finance and Economic Development – Botswana;

Mr. Tshediso Matona, Head of Secretariat – National Planning Commission – South Africa;

All UN Regional Directors

All UN Country Team members and staff;

Members of the media;

Good morning!

On behalf of the UN Team in Namibia, I am pleased to welcome all our guests to this Middle-Income Country Status Forum, held in the beautiful tourist capital city of Swakopmund; where the desert meets the sea.

Thank you for honoring the invitation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Team Namibia is also pleased to be part of this discussion, as Namibia's classification as a Middle-Income Status country continues to be a topic of debate.

This status has called for a shift in the way we 'do business' as the UN, towards a more strategic programming approach to support Namibia's war on poverty and inequality.

And on face value it makes sense. The UN Team, never tires of telling Namibia's good stories:

- Namibia has affected one of the fastest reductions in poverty on the continent and has managed to slightly reduce inequality while growing its gross national income (GNI)¹.
- Namibia ranks:
 - #5 on the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance²,
 - #1 in the provision of education³,
 - #1 when it comes to press freedom⁴, and
 - #4 in terms of gender parity in parliament⁵.

¹ World Income Inequality Database (latest data, 2010).

² Ibrahim Index of African Governance. 2017 IIAG Namibia Scores, Ranks & Trends. <http://bit.ly/2CrKX9J>

³ Ibrahim Index of African Governance. 2017 IIAG Namibia Scores, Ranks & Trends. <http://bit.ly/2CrKX9J>

⁴ Reporters Without Borders. World Press Freedom Index 2017. <http://bit.ly/1YGtJug>

⁵ Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women. Women in Parliament: 2017. <http://bit.ly/2g4Z2RC>

However, despite this remarkable progress and its Middle-Income Status, Namibia remains one of the most unequal countries in the world (Gini co-efficient of 0.572)⁶.

- 18% of the population still lives in poverty⁷.
- Unemployment stands at 28%⁸ with youth unemployment standing at approximately 39%⁹.
- We are currently in the midst of a Hepatitis E outbreak, having seen over 550 cases¹⁰ since October 2017.
- 72% of Namibian households practice open defecation¹¹.
- While almost 77%¹² of urban Namibian households have access to sanitation, the number stands at only 28% for rural households.
- 28.8% of Namibia's population is considered undernourished¹³.

Studies tell us that accelerating development is more challenging in an unequal country, and that human

⁶ NDP5 M&E, page 67

⁷ NDP5, Introduction page 6 – Figure is from 2015/2016

⁸ NDP5, page 6

⁹ NDP5, page 71 – Figure is the baseline from 2014

¹⁰ Government of the Republic of Namibia (GRN). Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS) Namibia. Outbreak of Hepatitis E in Windhoek Situation Update as of 29/01/2018. Total amount – 554 cases.

¹¹ NDP5, Sanitation page 69

¹² 76.9% - NDP5

¹³ The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017. <http://bit.ly/2jubGOu>

development indices such as life expectancy, violence, school dropout rates, and teenage births are negatively impacted.

We hope that among the issues we discuss, this forum will help us examine our approach; i.e. the balance between upstream (policy) and downstream (implementation) support to better tackle inequality in the countries we serve.

These are challenges for all countries represented here today, and therefore, we look forward to the outcomes of the discussions to be had over the next two days.

But first my real task.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to introduce Hon. Obeth Kandjoze, the newly appointed Minister of Economic Planning and the Director General of the National Planning Commission.

Hon. Kandjoze was previously the Minister of Mines and Energy, having served in this position for almost three years.

Hon. Kandjoze is a geologist by profession and has extensive experience in the petroleum industry. Before joining the Ministry of Mines and Energy, he worked with the National Petroleum Corporation of Namibia (NAMCOR) for 17 years.

Barely a week into his new portfolio, it is an honor and we are grateful to have him here with us.

Hon, the floor is yours!