



Remarks by

UN Resident Coordinator (a.i)

Ms. Rachel Odede

on the occasion of the

**Stakeholder Workshop on the
Understanding the Convention on
the Rights of Persons with
Disabilities:
Strategies for disability inclusive
development in Namibia**

**29 May 2018,
Windhoek, Namibia**

- Director of Ceremonies;
- Hon. Agnes Tjongarero, Deputy Minister of Sport, Youth and National Service;
- Hon. Alexia Manombe-Ncube, Deputy Minister, Office of the Vice President - Disability Affairs;
- Mr. Daniel Trum, Chairperson of the National Federation of Persons with Disabilities Namibia;
- Mr. Meliherius Haukambe, Acting Director of the National Disability Council of Namibia;
- Adv. John Walters, Ombudsperson;
- Representatives from different Government Ministries;
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
- Esteemed organisations of persons with disabilities;
- Members of civil society organisations (CSOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and academia;
- Fellow members of the United Nations Country Team and UN Colleagues;
- Invited Guests;
- Members of the media;
- Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good morning!

I am honoured to be here at the National Stakeholders' Workshop, aimed at providing a platform to identify various challenges faced by persons with disabilities and propose key strategies and practical interventions that assert the rights of persons with disabilities in Namibia. Today, various development partners will begin to collectively map solutions towards a truly inclusive Namibia.

Your Excellency,

This workshop is coming at an opportune time when the Government of the Republic of Namibia (GRN) is moving at a robust pace to meet its commitments under international and national development agendas, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Fifth National Development Plan (NDP5), Vision 2030, the Harambee Prosperity Plan (HPP), the Blue Print for Wealth Redistribution and Poverty Eradication and AU Agenda 2063.

These development agendas and frameworks have clear visions and targets to eradicate poverty and ensure that 'no-one is left behind' in social, economic and political development. To build on our momentum in achieving these agendas and continue propelling sustainable development in the country, we are here at this workshop to strengthen our policies and frameworks and to ensure that the voices of persons with disabilities are heard and considered.

At the same time, we are here to develop and agree on practical mechanisms and actions to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to education, health care services, work and employment, and social protection, among other development priorities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

According to World Bank Estimates, over one billion people across the world are living with some form of disability, amounting to 15% of the global population.¹ In Namibia, persons with disabilities amount for 5% of the population².

This significant percentage of the population is more likely to experience adverse and interrelated socio-economic outcomes including stigma and discrimination, limited education and employment opportunities and lack of adequate health care, infrastructure, transportation, water and sanitation, to name a few. For example, in Namibia³;

- 87% of children with disabilities between the ages of 0-4 years have never attended early childhood development (ECD) programmes.
- The proportion of persons with disabilities aged 5 years and above that never attended school is also high, especially in the rural areas at 82.1%, and 17.9% in the urban areas.
- The unemployment rate of persons with disabilities stood at 39%, compared to the national unemployment rate of 28%, leading to higher rates of poverty, increased dependency and less legal protection.

For too long, persons with disabilities have remained furthest behind on our development processes. It is time to address attitudinal, cultural and environmental barriers and obstacles which exclude, discriminate and prevent persons with disabilities from full and meaningful participation in public development discourse or activities.

Your Excellency,

I am happy that despite prevailing gaps, there is agreement among all of us here that the inclusion of persons with disabilities is a non-negotiable, pertinent investment for the country. This is evident through the great strides that Namibia has taken to date towards supporting and including persons with disabilities. The empowerment of persons with disabilities has been articulated and outlined in numerous regulations, including the Namibian Constitution, the National Disability Policy (1997), the National Disability Council Act (Act No 26 of 2004); the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education (2013) and the Child Care and Protection Act (Act No. 13 of 2015), and NDP5.

The implementation of these policy and legal frameworks, confirms Government's political will to provide the required policy, institutional and legal frameworks to enhance the lives of persons with disabilities. Namibia has also signed and ratified the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which we will be using as a tool during this workshop. This is an important global commitment to respect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities and to recognise the important role they play in all aspects of society and development.

Your Excellency,

The UN family in Namibia remains resolute in its shared commitment to support Namibia in addressing the barriers to inclusion of persons with disabilities across society. We are guided by our partnership

¹ The World Bank. Disability Inclusion. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/disability>

² The Namibia 2011 Population and Housing Census estimated that, out of a total population of 2,113 million inhabitants, there were between 85,000 and 100,000 people with disabilities, representing 5% of the total population.

³ The Namibia 2011 Population and Housing Census

framework with Government, the United Nations Partnership Framework (UNPAF) 2019-2023 and have made it our collective agenda to continuously provide technical and financial support to improve knowledge gaps about disability, support the creation of enabling environments and support efforts to overcome stigma and discrimination.

As players in development, we are committed to working with the stakeholders in this room in identifying the persistent gaps which continue to exist between policy and the practice of promoting the rights of persons with disabilities in the country. We also commit that beyond the margins of this workshop, we shall continue to challenge the barriers, discrimination and prejudice that people with disabilities face every day and ensure that we demonstrate that an independent life is both possible and affordable regardless of a person's physical or mental differences.

We look forward to expanding on current commitments and make new ones to ensure that no child or adult with disabilities is left behind in any process of development.

With these few remarks, I wish to thank the Office of the Vice-President, in particular the Department of Disability Affairs, for calling us together under one roof so that we begin to have this very important discussion, and I wish everyone a lively and productive exchange of ideas.

Thank you.