



**Remarks
By:**

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**NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON ENHANCING INCLUSIVE
DEVELOPMENT IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE UNITED
NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES:**

**ADVANCEMENT OF THE WHITE PAPER THE RIGHTS OF
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN NAMIBIA**

**9 March 2017
Safari Hotel,**

Windhoek

Namibia

Minister of Presidential Affairs, Hon. Frans Kapofi
Senior Government Officials
UN colleagues present
Traditional Authorities
Councilors
Distinguished invited guests
Member of the Media
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning,

I am pleased to be with you this morning at the official opening of this National Workshop on Rights of Indigenous People. I would like to begin by thanking the Office of the President for inviting the UN to be a part of this very important dialogue.

The rights of indigenous peoples (or as they are referred to in Namibia, the marginalized communities), and enhancing inclusive development in Namibia, are an important issue which has been under discussion for some time.

A UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous people visited Namibia in 2012, *since* then government has continued introduced progressive policies and taken legislative steps towards addressing the challenges faced by the indigenous peoples of Namibia

We hope that reflections, over the past few years will feed into a concrete action plan, to accelerate implementation of these policies.

We also hope that the finalization and prioritization of the 2014 White Paper on the rights of indigenous people will be an outcome of this workshop.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Development is most likely to succeed when all segments of society are able to participate, contribute and have a voice.

There are approximately 370 million indigenous peoples in the world.¹ They speak the majority of the world's six to seven thousand languages and they are custodians of an immense wealth of cultural and biological diversity.

As people who are indigenous, are often most affected by poverty, they are perhaps best placed to provide creative solutions to the challenges they face.

Director of ceremonies,

Indigenous People played a key role in forging the global sustainable development agenda (SDGs), by telling governments and the UN about their needs and ideas through a broad consultative process.

There are six direct references to indigenous peoples in the 2030 Agenda, including in Goal 2 related to the agricultural output of indigenous small-scale farmers, and Goal 4 on equal access to education for indigenous children.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Namibia is home to some of the most globally recognised indigenous peoples: the San and Himba; and indigenous people represent less than 8% of Namibia's total population.

This Government stands out among African Governments for some of the provisions it has made for indigenous peoples in Namibia.

-For example by signing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Government has also

¹ World Bank, "Indigenous Peoples, Poverty and Development", Washington 2014

worked with the ILO on implementing ILO's indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 169.

-Namibia has entered into innovative arrangements with one of the largest marginalized groups, the San, who have increased their control over land management.

-Projects under the Division of San Development, a part of the Ministry of Veteran Affairs and Marginalized People, have included resettlement through the purchase of commercial farms; and vocational training including in construction skills.

The division has been responsible for 'drought relief' to San and Ovaherero communities—the distribution of maize and other items of food to insecure communities

Since 2015, the budget of the Division of San Development has substantially increased from N\$ 300, 000 in 2005 to N\$82.8m (US\$5.8m) in 2016.²

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Namibia has progressive education policies that take marginalised communities into account. The country has also increased the number of schools in remote rural areas, as well as introduced free primary and secondary education.

-The UN in Namibia has supported government to develop the new Education Act which aggressively promotes an inclusive approach to education. We are also working on a National School Safety Framework to decrease drop-out rates of indigenous children.

-We have supported the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry through the Sustainable Management of Namibia's Forest Lands (NAFOLA) project to help indigenous communities in conservancies (Okongo and Tsumkwe) to sustainably harvest the forest resources.

² AN ASSESSMENT OF NAMIBIAN LEGAL, POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS RELEVANT TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, 2016

The UN further supports the Ministry of Environment and Tourism through the SCORE project to support marginalized communities (OvaHimba, OvaZemba and OvaTwe) in Kunene with micro-drip irrigation gardens, and with Conservation Agriculture activities and training.

Despite these positive achievements, there is still work to be done.

The continued gap between good policy and good practice is underscored by high levels of absenteeism and school dropout rates. Only 43 percent of San children age 7 attend school, as opposed to 83 percent of the English speaking children, also aged 7.³

There is an ongoing discussion about efficiency vs equity in the delivery of services to indigenous populations; how to ensure quality education and health services are available in remote areas at a reasonable cost.

We need to strengthen efforts to remove barriers such as bullying that inhibit the San, Himba and other indigenous groups from accessing education.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Here in Namibia a full-fledged War on Poverty is underway. The goal is to accelerate development and to eradicate poverty and inequality so no one is left out.

Full, meaningful and effective participation of indigenous peoples would be key to achieving Namibia's development objective.

Therefore Ladies and Gentlemen,

³ Namibia Out of School Report, 2015

This workshop could not be timelier.

The 2014 White Paper on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is an important step towards ensuring that the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is translated into policies and programmes on the ground.

There is therefore a need to ensure that:

1. We redouble implementation efforts around existing policies and legislation
2. We finalise and prioritize the white paper to ensure that the indigenous people of Namibia are able to enjoy their individual and collective rights.

The United Nations, YOUR PARTNER OF CHOICE has committed its unwavering support to Vision 2030, and the quest to improve the quality of life of ALL Namibians.

We believe in the promise of a future where all Namibians, including indigenous and marginalized people, will be educated, healthy and enjoy a peaceful nation that is industrialized by its women and men, boys and girls.

I wish you a fruitful outcome of your deliberations.

I thank you!