

Remarks

By

Ms. Kiki Gbeho

UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative

Media Briefing on UN @ 70

Hon Bishop Zephania Kameeta, Minister of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare,

Mr Patrick Haingura, Acting Director of the Youth Directorate,

Mr Kapere, Executive Chairperson of the National Youth Council,

Heads of UN Agencies,

UN Staff,

Media Houses present,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much for attending this media briefing, to launch activities commemorating the 70th Anniversary of the UN. The UN in Namibia has chosen the theme: Youth, Development & Poverty as our focus at this important juncture in time.

While UN@70 presents an opportunity for the UN to reflect on its history and its achievements, it also provides an opportunity to

reflect on current challenges; and allows us to take courage from our past in order to influence the future.

Namibia remains one of the UN's great success stories. UNTAG's role in creating conditions for the holding of free and fair elections led to the sovereign state of Namibia. Nearly 8,000 men and women; and police, and military personnel from more than 120 countries came to Namibia to assist in the process toward independence.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Almost two weeks ago the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by world leaders in New York. Goal number one is to eradicate poverty.

H.E. the President, Dr. Hage G. Geingob has declared a war on poverty. The President shared this objective during the UN General Assembly in NY, and has established a Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare to spearhead and coordinate efforts.

We in the UN have pledged support for this battle and the selection of our theme for UN@70 is a deliberate choice, to demonstrate our commitment to the cause.

During my almost 3 months in Namibia, I have seized every opportunity available to spread the message that Namibia has a positive story to tell about development.

Since Independence, the number of poor people has declined significantly (From 7 to 3 out of every ten people). More people have access to clean water (84%) and almost every child in Namibia can go to school (99%). Namibia ranks number 5 in Africa in terms of gender parity in parliament¹ and also ranks number 5 on the Mo Ibrahim Governance Index for Africa.

Despite this good news, inequality still exists. One in every three people is unemployed, with youth unemployment as high as 52 %.² Hunger and malnutrition remain a serious concern, (24% of children under five are stunted) as is the vulnerability of people to drought and other climate-related shocks.

There remain a number of areas where poverty has been resistant to efforts to eradicate its impact. Poverty levels are higher in rural areas as compared to urban centers. Female-headed households, older pensioners, subsistence farmers and young people are all disproportionately affected.³

For development to occur, people cannot be hungry or thirsty. They must be healthy, educated and able to earn a living. Then and only then can they effectively contribute towards improving the social and economic wellbeing of their community.

This is the fundamental premise of Vision 2030: a peaceful and prosperous Namibia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

¹ Inter-Parliamentary Union "Women in national parliaments as at 1 August 2015"

² Ibid

³ Namibia MDG Interim Report 2013

As the United Nations Team in Namibia, we remain optimistic.

We can bring together global, continental and local knowledge and expertise in support of the war on poverty. We can support the domestication of the SDGs with tools, and policy guidance to ensure that Namibia learns from best practice near and far.

By listening to the youth, harnessing their energy, and integrating them into development fora, we can support them in taking a lead role in finding solutions.

The UN continues to believe in the vision of a prosperous and empowered Namibia, a Namibia where poverty and inequality are things of the past and wealth creation, employment generation and a skilled and motivated youth lay the foundations for the future.

We in the UN will use the UN@70 as a platform to redouble our efforts in this regard, and look forward to working with you to turn this vision into a reality.

Thank you for your kind attention.