

Secretary-General Appoints Bience Gawanas of Namibia Special Adviser on Africa

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres announced today the appointment of Bience Gawanas of Namibia as Special Adviser on Africa. She will succeed Maged Abdelaziz of Egypt, to whom the Secretary-General is grateful for his commitment and dedicated service to the Organization. The Secretary-General also wishes to extend his appreciation to David Mehdi Hamam, who served as Acting Special Adviser since Mr. Abdelaziz's departure.

Ms. Gawanas is currently Special Adviser to Namibia's Minister of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare. Prior to this, she was Special Adviser to the Minister of Health and Social Services. A champion of women's health and rights in Africa, she has been commended for her role in initiating far-reaching campaigns, such as the continental Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA).

Ms. Gawanas was elected for two terms as Commissioner for Social Affairs at the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government in 2003 and 2008, during which time she was responsible for advocacy, as well as the harmonization and coordination of regional and continental policies and programmes promoting social development. Her portfolio included health, HIV/AIDS and nutrition, migration and population, arts and culture, the welfare of vulnerable groups, labour and migration, and sports. From 1996 to 2003, she was Ombudswoman of Namibia, having previously worked as a lecturer on gender law at the University of Namibia, from 1995 to 1997, and as a lawyer at the Legal Assistance Centre, a human rights non-governmental organization, from 1990 to 1991.

She has served on various task forces and commissions, including the UNAIDS (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS) Global Task Team on Improving AIDS Coordination among Multilateral Institutions and International Donors, the Task Force for Scaling Up Education and Training for Health Workers, the Global Commission on HIV and the Law, the Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health, the Global Steering Committee on scaling up towards Universal Access, and the Lancet-Oslo University Commission on Global Governance for Health.

Ms. Gawanas holds a Bachelor of Laws (honours) from University of Warwick, United Kingdom, and an utter barrister degree from the Council of Legal Education School of Law/Lincoln's Inn, United Kingdom. She also holds an Executive Master of Business Administration from the University of Cape Town, South Africa, and an honorary doctorate in law from the University of the Western Cape.

Born in 1956, Ms. Gawanas has three children and four grandchildren.