

**Remarks**

**By**

**Ms. Anita Kiki Gbeho**

**UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative**

**Official Launch of the National Dialogue on Wealth Redistribution  
and Poverty Eradication**

**14 August, 2015**

**Nampower Convention Centre**

**Windhoek, Namibia**

H.E. Dr Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia

Vice President Dr Nickey Iyambo

Prime Minister Hon Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila

Hon Ministers and Members of Parliament

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

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Senior Government Officials

Members from the private sector and civil society

Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great pleasure that I give this speech on behalf of the UN and in support of the launch of the National Dialogue on wealth redistribution and poverty eradication. Many thanks to the Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare for the invitation.

In his inaugural speech last March<sup>1</sup>, His Excellency Dr. Hage Geingob declared a '*war on poverty and inequality*' and created a Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare that will spearhead efforts in this regard.

---

<sup>1</sup> Speech delivered by His Excellency Dr. Hage Geingob, in the occasion of his oath of office, on 21st of March 2015

On behalf of the UN system in Namibia, I wish to assure His Excellency, of the UN's collective support to the National Dialogue process, scheduled to take place in all 14 regions.

Through this consultation process, a wider range of stakeholders, including national and regional government bodies, traditional authorities, civil and faith based organizations and private sector, voices will be heard. This will help inform the development of a national poverty eradication framework.

*Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen*

The countdown of the expiration of the MDGs has already begun and countries, the world over, are taking stock of MDG progress.

Namibia has made great strides since the Millennium Declaration was signed in 2000. The country has succeeded in halving poverty much ahead of 2015.

Today, the number of poor people in Namibia has been reduced from seven to three out of every ten people.<sup>2</sup> Progress has also been made in primary education enrolment, which currently stands at over 99%. Namibia ranks third in the Education for All Development Index; 84% of the population has access to safe drinking water. Progress has also been made in the fight against Malaria and TB, with malaria mortality and morbidity reduced by over 90 percent since 2000 and TB cases dropping by 22% since 2013. New infections of HIV have also reduced by 50% since 2001.

Despite this progress, the MDGs remain an unfinished agenda.

---

<sup>2</sup> 28.7 per cent of the population of Namibia lives below the national poverty line (Namibia MDG Interim Report 2013)

With a Gini coefficient at 0.59<sup>3</sup>, inequality is still high in Namibia. Poverty levels are higher in rural areas as compared to urban centers. Female-headed households, older pensioners and subsistence farmers are disproportionately affected.<sup>4</sup> In some regions more than 50 per cent of the population lives below the national poverty line. Mobile populations and rapid urbanization are also an exacerbating factor.

One in every three people, in Namibia, is unemployed, with youth unemployment as high as 52 per cent.<sup>5</sup> 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.

And coordination gaps still remain at all levels.

Next month, in New York, Heads of State and Government will adopt the new development agenda to guide actions over the next 15 years. This agenda, which has the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at its core, calls for global action to eradicate poverty and to save the planet.

The recently agreed outcome document '*Transforming our World; the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*' recognises that '*we can be the first generation to succeed in ending poverty; just as we may be the last to have a chance of saving the planet*'.

*Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen*

---

<sup>3</sup> NDP 4

<sup>4</sup> Namibia MDG Interim Report 2013

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

The post-2015 development agenda, with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, will be instrumental in translating Namibia's poverty eradication aspirations into action. Your Excellency, Namibia must be congratulated for taking a lead role in shaping Africa's Common Position on the SDGs. In the UN Secretary-Generals report on poverty eradication he states that *"[t]o achieve our goals, countries need to integrate them into national planning, policy, budgets, law and institutions. They will require integrated institutions that are effective, and human resources equipped with the skills and capacities to deliver sustainable development."*

The United Nations Country Team stands ready to support Namibia to integrate the SDGs and poverty agenda into planning, policies and strategies at the national and sub-national level. Tools, policies and programmes are under development and will enable us to provide the Government of Namibia with capacity support to not only integrate the SDGs, but also to accelerate results and track progress.

The outcome of last month's meeting in Ethiopia on Financing for development 'The Addis Ababa Action Agenda' recognizes the challenge many middle-income countries face as they grow; the so-called 'missing middle'. Although MICs are able to mobilize more domestic and international capital, it is still not enough to meet their rising investment needs, compensate for reductions in grants and concessional finance, and meet the needs for exchange of experience and policy assistance.

*Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen*

The eradication of extreme poverty and vulnerability require a number of interventions to be in place. Globally we have learned lessons which can be applied in the Namibian context.

For example we have learned that well designed social policies such as free education and healthcare and safety nets, such as those in Mauritius and Seychelles have led to better standards of living. Social transfers in South Africa have reduced the poverty gap by 48%. The implementation of the Tanzania Social Action Fund helped communities' access social services through infrastructure projects such as schools, health facilities and water points, reaching up to 16 million people in the pilot phase. Poverty in Malaysia has fallen from 49 percent to 1 percent between 1970 and 2014. Brazil through the Bolsa Familia Programme has lifted millions out of poverty.

These experiences suggest that Namibia can eradicate poverty by 2030 by strengthening social policies, scaling up implementation and multi sector coordination of its plans.

Winning the war on poverty is a difficult, but not impossible, task. What we have collectively learnt through practical experience in Namibia and global best practice leads us to pass three key messages:

1. We must not lose sight of the fact that Namibia has put in place good policies and implemented successful programmes to reduce poverty and inequality. This is evidenced by an almost 40% reduction in the most poor since 1990. But more needs to be done.
2. Successfully eradicating poverty is not the sole responsibility of a single line Ministry it requires strengthened coordination

through a multi-sectoral approach. Perhaps a “Poverty Eradication Council” could be considered where Line Ministries and partners, including private sector and civil society, can come together in the fight against poverty. Such a Council could review and ensure that the various poverty reduction interventions are coordinated and focused on expanding actions that work, and modifying (or discarding) those that do not. Outcomes from the National Dialogue could be discussed and actioned in this council.

3. The UN system has experience in supporting poverty eradication and stands ready to support the Government of Namibia in its efforts. The UN therefore pledges to provide support to internalizing the SDGs and outcomes of the National dialogue, integrating them into existing plans, policies and most important action. Furthermore, the UN could help link the Namibian Government to some of the countries that have realized success through south south cooperation.

Namibia's Vision 2030 calls for an industrialized nation driven by people who are skilled and healthy and who enjoy a peaceful nation that provides opportunities for all its women and men, boys and girls. We believe strengthened institutions and coordination are key to this agenda.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, we in the UN share in this vision and look forward to working with you to turn this vision into a reality.

I thank you!