

**REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBWA, PRESIDENT OF  
THE REPUBLIC  
OF NAMIBIA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE COMMEMORATION OF  
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY AND LAUNCH OF THE REVISED NATIONAL  
GENDER POLICY**

**08 MARCH 2012**

**WINDHOEK**

*\*Check Against  
Delivery*

**Director of Ceremonies,  
Honourable Doreen Sioka, Minister of Gender Equality and Child Welfare,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Honourable Members of Parliament,  
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,  
Esteemed Mr. Musinga Bandora, UN Resident Coordinator in Namibia,  
Esteemed Representatives of Civil Society Organisations,  
Senior Government Officials Present,  
Distinguished Invited Guests,  
Members of the Media,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**I am delighted to be here this morning to witness the launch of Namibia's National Gender Policy, covering the period from 2010 to 2020. This policy is one of the important interventions by our Government to address historical injustices caused by gender imbalances in our society. At the same time, it will contribute significantly to our efforts to roll back the frontiers of poverty, especially among Namibian women and girl children.**

**The Revised National Gender Policy has replaced an earlier policy, namely the National Gender Policy of 1997.**

**The implementation of the National Gender Policy will create the necessary synergies for the achievement of national development objectives through the National Development Plans (NDPs) and ultimately, the aspirations of Vision 2030.**

**Director of Ceremonies,**

**We believe that the enjoyment of freedom and independence by Namibian women is compromised when our women face grinding poverty and gender-based violence threatens them and disrupts their lives with frequent regularity. In light of these social realities, we decided to put mechanisms in place in order to empower Namibian women and girl children and to find practical and effective long-term solutions. Hence, the adoption of the National Gender Policy in 1997.**

**In launching that Policy, we were fully conscious that it should be flexible and dynamic in order to effectively address the changing and evolving issues in this field. We were also aware that its implementation had to be reviewed periodically in order to identify shortcomings and weakness. This would ensure that the policy remained current and relevant in light of gender policy developments internationally.**

**Thus, the Revised Gender Policy that we are launching here today, is, in many ways based on the lessons that we have learnt during the implementation of the 1997 Policy, and its review which was conducted in 2007.**

**That review indicated that progress has been made towards gender equality in the economic, political, education and legal spheres. For example, the enrolment of girls in primary and secondary schools had increased significantly. Moreover, the number of female students enrolling at tertiary institutions has also risen. According to these statistics, Namibia is on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) targets on education by 2015. These are achievements that we should all be proud of. Another important outcome of the review was the compilation of the Policy Document that we are launching here today.**

**At the same time, however, we should also be aware that despite the existence of progressive laws, policies and programmes which we have put in place, the evil of gender-based violence continues to show its ugly face in our society. According to reports, Namibian women and children are assaulted, raped and even murdered on a daily basis.**

In keeping with international policy developments, the focus areas covered in the Revised National Gender Policy have been expanded to 12, as opposed to 10, in the initial policy. Thus, the focus areas in the Revised Policy now include issues such as:

- (1) Poverty and Rural Development;
- (2) Education and Training;
- (3) Health, Reproductive Health and HIV and AIDS;
- (4) Gender Based Violence;
- (5) Trade and Economic Empowerment;
- (6) Governance and Decision-Making;
- (7) Media Information and Communication;
- (8) Environment;
- (9) Issues of the Girl-Child;
- (10) Peace-Building and Conflict Resolution, and Natural Disaster-Management;
- (11) Legal Affairs and Human Rights; and
- (12) Gender Equality in the Family Context.

All these issues have been articulated and adopted to our own context in order to reinforce our efforts to empower Namibian women, while at the same time serving as tools of addressing poverty and the structural inequalities that have historically disadvantaged women in our society.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare for their hard work, which made this event possible.

At the same time, I would like to commend all stakeholders and development co-operation partners who contributed, in so many ways, to the review of the policy and indeed to the compilation of the new policy document. Your inputs have enabled our Government to produce a policy document that we are truly proud of. I thank you all.

Director of Ceremonies,

The policy we are launching here today has its roots in our Government's need to correct the difficult socio-economic realities faced by Namibian women, and indeed in our collective desire to build a more just society, where all our citizens can enjoy their constitutional rights. This is because we strongly believe that in the face of these realities, we cannot talk of freedom and justice, while Namibian women who comprise more than half of the population continue to endure discriminatory practices, poverty and violence in their daily lives.

Director of Ceremonies,

It is a pleasant coincidence that we are launching our Revised National Gender Policy on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, which has been declared as the International Day of Women.

The theme for the International Day of Women this year is titled "*Connecting Girls, Inspiring Futures*". We should use this day to recommit ourselves to the empowerment of women and girls, with a view to creating opportunities and opening doors for them to fully contribute to the development of our countries and the world as a whole.

**International instruments such as the *1945 Universal Declaration on Human Rights*; the *Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*; the *Beijing Declaration Platform for Action and its Optional Protocol* and the *SADC Protocol on Gender and Development* have established the framework for the empowerment of women. These instruments have also become part and parcel of our domestic laws and we should do all that we can to ensure that their noble ideals are realized for the benefit and empowerment of Namibian women and their counterparts around the world. After all, whenever and wherever women are empowered, it means that families, communities and ultimately nations are empowered. This translates into a better and safer world. In this context, we welcome the creation of UN Women, as a specialized UN Agency, with specific focus on women issues.**

**Director of Ceremonies,**

**Since the attainment of independence in 1990, Namibia has been committed to the promotion of Human Rights as contained in the Bill of Rights of our national Constitution. Article 10 of the Constitution provides an important foundation for our society based on non-discrimination. In addition, we have enacted several forward-looking pieces of legislation aimed at further promoting and protecting human rights in the country. These include the Married Persons Equality Act; Affirmative Action Act; Combating of Domestic Violence Act; Combating of Rape Act; and Communal Land Reform Amendment Act. Among other things, these laws provide for the promotion of women's rights in different social and economic settings. Our Government remains committed to their full implementation and enforcement.**

**In order to accelerate the implementation of the National Gender Policy and related initiatives, a National Gender Plan of Action entitled; '*Effective Partnership Towards Gender Equality*' was launched in 1998. It stands as the embodiment of our nation's commitment to the advancement of equality and development. It also identifies national goals, expected outcomes and role-players in the implementation process.**

**Equally importantly, the Plan of Action has made it a requirement that a gender perspective is consistently reflected in all our public policies and programmes. Furthermore, in terms of the Revised National Gender Policy, a National Permanent Gender Taskforce will be established to coordinate and monitor the implementation. The Taskforce will be an advisory body, comprising of key stakeholders in the government, private sector, academic institutions, development co-operation partners, NGOs, faith-based organisations, media and civil society organisations.**

**The goal of this Policy is to guide actions towards the integration and mainstreaming of gender perspectives in the broad national development framework. Therefore, I have no doubt that it will go a long way towards the achievement of gender equality in our country. In this light, I encourage all our people to join hands and work together so that we can achieve its noble objectives. I wish to reiterate my Government's support for 50/50 representation of women in decision making positions.**

**Once again, I wish to commend you all for your hard work and commitment in the struggle for women emancipation in order to achieve gender equality. It is now my pleasure to declare the National Gender Policy 2010-2020 officially launched.**

**I thank you.**