

**REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. HAGE GEINGOB,  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA,  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE GENDER IS MY AGENDA CAMPAIGN**

**JUNE 5, 2018**

**WINDHOEK COUNTRY CLUB RESORT**

**WINDHOEK**

*Check against Delivery*

**Director of Ceremonies;**

**Your Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Former President of the Republic of Liberia;**

**Comrade Nangolo Mbumba, Vice President of the Republic of Namibia and Madame Mbumba;**

**Right Honourable Prime Minister, Saara Kugongelwa Amadhila and Mr. Amadhila;**

**Hon. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation and Lt. Gen. (Rtd) Ndaitwah;**

**Comrade Nicky Iyambo, Former Vice President of the Republic of Namibia and Madame Iyambo;**

**Hon. Peter Katjavivi, Speaker of the National Assembly and Madame Katjavivi;**

**Madame Monica Geingos, First Lady of the Republic of Namibia;**

**Cabinet Ministers and Deputy Ministers;**

**Members of the Diplomatic Corps;**

**GIMAC Representatives;**

**Distinguished Invited Guests;**

**Members of the Media;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen.**

**I am pleased to be here this evening, in order to participate in this auspicious occasion, and receive the prestigious award, on behalf of the people of the Republic of Namibia.**

**Namibia has been conferred an award as a top performing country in Africa by the African Gender Forum, within the context of the Gender Is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC). More can be done for women in Namibia. But the progress we have made in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women in our society is something we should be proud of.**

**It is why, on behalf of the Namibian Government and the people of Namibia, I would like to thank GIMAC and the people of Africa for recognizing our modest efforts in promoting gender equality through different policy initiatives and interventions.**

**At this juncture, let me take this opportunity to welcome to Namibia, Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Former President of the Republic of Liberia. It is an honour for us to host a great leader and champion for Women's Rights in Africa, justice for all in Africa, and protection of the girl child, including those afflicted by diseases such as Ebola. A testament to Your Excellency's commitment to these causes, is the fact that during your final week in office, you signed an executive order on domestic violence, protecting women, men and children against "physical, sexual, economical, emotional and psychological abuses". This welcome also includes the leaders of GIMAC who are present here.**

**The Indian activist, Mahatma Gandhi, perfectly captures the reason why we should place a premium on Gender equality. Gandhi says and I quote, "Man and woman are a peerless pair; being supplementary to one another; each helps the other, so that without the one, the existence of the other cannot be conceived**

**and, therefore, it follows that anything that impairs the status of either of them will involve the equal ruin of them both.”**

**In Namibia, Gender Equality is not a slogan. We breathe it, speak it, and live it. We do so, knowing well, that men and women are peerless partners who are supplementary to one another. Each helps the other, so that without the one, the existence of the other cannot be conceived and, therefore, it follows that anything that impairs the status of either of them will involve the equal ruin of them both. This is what Gandhi reminds us.**

**The empowerment of women is about human rights and application of natural justice. We have consolidated this notion within our laws. Specifically, Article 10 of the Namibian Constitution, which is the Supreme Law of our land, clearly states, “All persons shall be equal before the law...and no persons may be discriminated against on grounds of sex, race, color, ethnic origin, religion, creed or social or economic status.” The protection of rights, which are contained in our Constitution are buttressed by the Married Persons Equality Act, which ensures that aspects of**

**common and customary law on marriage, are in line with the Constitution. So man is not automatically a Head of Household. Therefore, the couple must decide who the Head of the Household is.**

**Our commitment to Gender Equality is visible when you look at the important role women play in politics, including our Executive and Legislature. We have been able to consolidate participation of women when the ruling SWAPO Party took a principled decision at the 1997 Congress by passing a resolution to increase the proportion of female delegates to the Party's congress up to 50 percent.**

**This was the genesis of the now constitutionally mandated SWAPO Party, Zebra style 50/50 policy. Before I continue with my speech, I would like to put on record that our achievements in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment are due to the sterling efforts of my predecessors, the Founding Father of**

**the Nation, Comrade Sam Nujoma and the Second President, Comrade Hifikepunye Pohamba.**

**They ensured that gender equality was always on the agenda and this insistence culminated in the pushing through of the 50/50 policy by President Pohamba at the 2013 SWAPO Party Extra Ordinary Congress at Swakopmund.**

**Within SWAPO, we have placed women at the strategic level. The Top 4 in SWAPO Party consists of two men and two women. The Vice President of SWAPO, who also happens to be our Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation is a woman, and so is the Secretary General of the Party.**

**They are joined tonight by a powerful contingent of women leaders such as the Prime Minister, and many of our female Ministers and Deputy Ministers, who hold strategic portfolios within Government. Currently, women comprise forty-five and a half percent of the members of our National Assembly.**

**Our commitment is not only about increasing the chances of success for the girl-child, but we aspire, through the participation of the girl-child, to promote and nurture women leaders, for today and tomorrow.**

**Inclusive governance is the key to inclusive growth and an effective tool for women's empowerment. Participation of women at all levels of governance symbolizes freedom and equality, not only in decision making bodies, but in society at large.**

**During our two-year tenure of the Award, I am committed to champion the theme: "Women's Empowerment and Inclusive Governance" which signal our continued intent to increase the participation of women in all spheres of socio-economic life.**

**Director of ceremonies,**



**Namibia is committed to increasing the numbers of women in decision making positions. More important, we have to ensure that they contribute effectively towards meaningful change in the lives of our citizens.**

**Women have an integral role to play in the pursuit of our national, regional and continental developmental objectives.**

**Without the equal participation of women in our development initiatives, we will not be able to bring about an Africa of equal opportunities in which all people will pursue their aspirations.**

**Let us also bear in mind the fact that our struggle for independence, was brought about by the valiant efforts of both women and men.**

**Therefore, it holds true, that within the context of the second phase of our struggle, we should promote the equal partnership of both men and women, walking side by side and pulling in the**

**same direction in support of Harambee Prosperity Plan towards economic emancipation and shared prosperity.**

**Namibia continues to dedicate its efforts and resources to the gender agenda and to ensure that gender equality and women empowerment is entrenched at all levels of governance. Our national efforts and instruments, the Constitution, National Gender Policy and its two National Plans of Action, the National Gender Plan of Action and the National Gender Based Violence Plan of Action are aligned to the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, the Maputo Protocol and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa.**

**The Namibian Government is fully aware of the importance of education in empowering our women.**

**Education is and will always be the greatest equaliser. It is a powerful weapon in our arsenal, aimed at eliminating the undesirable phenomenon of "Feminization of Poverty". We are**

**aware that women are some of the hardest hit victims by the scourge of poverty due to lack of equal access to education. This situation increases their vulnerability to become victims of rape, violence, prostitution and human trafficking.**

**We will therefore ensure that gender-mainstreaming efforts to ensure equal access, retention and successful completion of school are being strengthened, starting with the introduction of free primary and secondary education, which has been in effect since 2013.**

**Furthermore, we have made progress in the implementation of the National Gender Policy, which among other things, aims to reduce gender inequality in education. In an effort to enhance the economic status of our women, the new Public Procurement Act, 2015 makes provision for women to benefit from procurement processes.**

**Director of ceremonies,**

**Peace & Security is central to the sustainability of our democracy, and from the onset of independence, Namibia realised the important role that women play in conflict resolution, peace building and sustainable peace as recognised in the United Nations Resolution 1325. It is for this reason that we have incorporated women as agents of peace and security in our National Gender Policy.**

**To date, Namibia has deployed a large contingent of female officers in various peacekeeping missions with positive results. We are now in the process of finalising a National Action Plan on women, peace and security. In fully implementing Women, Peace and Security issues, a Technical Committee Co-Chaired by the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Gender and Child Welfare was established to develop the National Plan of Action on women participation in Peace and Security. Gender Based Violence, especially against women and girls has reached worrying levels,**

**and is a matter of national concern. It is a global concern, I should add.**

**Women empowerment will be a futile exercise if Gender Based Violence is not addressed, therefore concerted efforts in collaboration with Civil Society, Faith Based Organisations and NGOs is being undertaken in order to tackle the scourge of Gender Based Violence, head-on.**

**The Zero Tolerance Mass Media Campaign on Gender Based Violence, including Trafficking in Persons, which commenced in 2009 was revamped in 2015.**

**It has now become an ongoing National campaign in Namibia under the theme "Spot It to Stop it". Let us all take on the noble responsibility of protecting our mothers, sisters and daughters. Let us remove Gender Based Violence from our homes, neighbourhoods, towns and cities. Let us create societies in**

**which women and girls do not live in fear of any psychological or physical harm.**

**In this regard, I would like to commend the Office of the First Lady for initiating the #BeFree Movement which provides a multi-sector platform to initiate difficult discussions between parents and the youth on the socio-economic and cultural practices which prevent our youth from “being free”. The #BeFree collaboration with grassroots organisations and subject matter experts has triggered numerous national conversations on complex topics and has played an important role in removing the culture of secrecy that shields harmful practices.**

**Director of ceremonies,**

**In my Africa Day Message on May 25, 2018, I raised the valid point that in the New Africa, “we have a unique opportunity to create sustainable conditions for our collective success”. We should realize that the opportunity cannot be seized if we exclude**

**women through gender insensitive and harmful cultural practices.**

**We cannot run the race towards our economic emancipation with one leg; we need both legs, we need men and women.**

**The participation of women in all spheres of our society is not an option nor is it a favour – it is necessary for peaceful and successful societies. We should leave no stone unturned in enabling the girl-child and women to reach their potential, express their creativity, and nurture their talent.**

**When we do so, together, as men and women, we can pull together to pursue our bold vision in Agenda 2063: the Africa We Want. Together, we can achieve the dream of a united and prosperous Africa.**

**I thank you!**