

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



(Check against delivery)

**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. HAGE G. GEINGOB,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA AT THE
GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 73rd SESSION OF THE UNITED
NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

SEPTEMBER 26, 2018

NEW YORK

Your Excellency, Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the 73rd Session of the UN General Assembly;
Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government;
Your Excellency, Mr. Antonio Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations;

Madame President,

I wish to congratulate you on your election as President of the 73rd Session of this August Assembly.

On July 21, 2018, the people of Namibia and our friends around the world, laid to rest our first Foreign Minister, Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab. He represented our liberation movement, SWAPO, here at the United Nations for over 15 years. Under his Presidency at the 54th Session of the United Nations General Assembly we adopted the Millennium Development Goals, the precursor to the Sustainable Development Goals.

The family of Dr. Gurirab, the Government and people of the Republic of Namibia, have been deeply touched by the outpouring of condolences and sympathies following his death. We are deeply appreciative of the memorial service held in his honour here at the UN Headquarters.

Two weeks ago, I travelled to Accra for the burial of Kofi Annan, the 7th Secretary General of this venerable Organization - - an African son whose flame has been extinguished, but whose light will shine on through the ages. A few days ago, in this very hall, we gathered to pay tribute to this revered personality and architect of peace. He was a man of great stature, who dedicated his entire adult life towards the pursuit of global peace and security.

May the souls of these distinguished Sons of Africa and the UN, rest in eternal peace.

Madame President,

Following the end of the Cold War and the old bi-polar dispensation, the world has slowly drifted ever more worryingly towards unilateral action. This development goes against one of fundamental tenets of democracy upon which our organization is built. Democracy might have its flaws but it is by far the best system that enables key values of the United Nations, necessary for sustained inclusive development. It is for this reason that we must embrace multilateralism with greater urgency, to

counter unilateral action. It is also for this reason that we fully concur with the Secretary General's sentiments as contained in his Statement to this Assembly that, and I quote, "As today's problems grow ever more global, multilateralism is more important than ever".

The Republic of Namibia is founded upon the principles of democracy, the rule of law and justice. The fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in our Constitution include virtually all the rights and freedoms recognized in international human rights instruments. However, these instruments in themselves are not sufficient to bring about sustainable development.

Namibia recognizes that there are existing and emerging threats, and challenges that continue to frustrate individual and collective efforts to achieve greater socio-economic progress. To this end, Namibia has embraced sustainable development and is fully committed to Agenda 2030 Agenda, its principles, goals, targets and indicators. As a matter of fact, Namibia has integrated all 17 Goals and their targets in its National Development Plans.

As a dry and arid country, often affected by seasonal droughts and floods, we have stepped up our efforts to implement the SDGs in critical areas, such as energy, water and terrestrial ecosystems. In this respect, Namibia wishes to benefit from the assistance rendered through the "Technology Bank established in Istanbul, on 4 June 2018, to enable the timeous identification of spatial locations of drought and flood areas.

In July this year, Namibia presented its Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the SDGs. This was Namibia's first opportunity to present on progress made in implementing the 2030 Agenda on the world stage and as complemented by the AU Agenda 2063, in pursuance of the "Africa We Want".

While Namibia has witnessed sustained economic growth over much of the last ten years, unemployment remains persistently high. Nevertheless, Namibia has observed one of the fastest reductions of poverty levels in our region over the last 10 years – from 28.8% to 17.4%. I am also happy to inform that life expectancy in Namibia has risen from 58 to 65 years. However, inequality in Namibia remains a challenge, as reflected in the skewed ownership of land, where white Namibians owns 70 percent of all agricultural land.

In our pursuit of creating favourable conditions to fight poverty and maintain peace and stability, Namibia will hold its 2nd National Land Conference during the first

week of October 2018. In preparation for the Conference, the Government conducted consultations in all our 14 Regions, to ensure an inclusive process. We believe in consultation. If diplomacy fails, people go to war. That is why we are pursuing an inclusive consultative process, with the full knowledge that “inclusivity spells harmony and exclusivity spells conflict.” We have made a concerted effort to include as many stakeholders as possible and to ensure that everything will be done within the ambit of our laws. As a result, we call on our development partners to support the outcome of this Conference, so as to continue assisting us in the process of socio-economic transformation.

Madame President,

I have stated before that Namibia’s classification, as an Upper-Middle Income nation does not take into account the skewed distribution of income. It prevents us from accessing Official Development Assistance and affordable, concessional finance. The situation has the potential to jeopardize efforts in Namibia and other developing countries to fully achieve Agenda 2030.

Communicable diseases threaten to jeopardize the attainment of Agenda 2030. For that reason, Namibia endorses the call to end tuberculosis endemic and reaffirms her commitment to unite with the world in achieving this goal. With a population of approximately 2.5 million people, Namibia ranks the 9th highest affected and TB one of the top three causes of hospitalization. The Government of Namibia has demonstrated its commitment to address TB by including related targets into the 5th National Development Plan and also by ensuring that 70% of available funding for TB comes from domestic resources. I should caution that inadequate human and financial resources, high levels of poverty, and lack of public health services in rural areas remain a concern. As the chairman of Southern African Development Community (SADC), our region reaffirms its commitment to the Declaration, through the “Harmonized Surveillance Framework for HIV and AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria” and resolves to join the international community in the fight against Tuberculosis.

Madame President,

I congratulate the Secretary General for the launch of the United Nation’s Global Youth Strategy. Africa has the fastest growing youth population. In my capacity as Chairperson of SADC, I wish to inform you that the region has adopted a Strategy to achieve industrialization by 2063. In this regard, the 38th SADC Summit, which took place in August 2018, in Windhoek, Namibia, adopted the theme, “Promoting

Infrastructure Development and Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development”.

We are convinced that the youth of the SADC and indeed of the world, are the future custodians of our social, political, economic and governance infrastructure. As such, the youth needs to be capacitated with requisite skills and training, and economically empowered through entrepreneurship to drive development towards inclusive growth and shared prosperity.

The youth of the SADC region, like their counterparts in the world, yearn for better prospects. They yearn for a future of opportunity and job certainty, where the Fourth Industrial Revolution will present opportunity and not threat. A future characterized by rapid advancement of technologies, advanced robotics, artificial intelligence and mechanization should present more opportunities for our youth and humanity at large. The onus is on us to understand how these technologies can create opportunities for our youth to become drivers of economic growth and industrial development.

Madame President,

Let me emphasize that excluding women from certain spheres of life is to put to waste skills and expertise that can contribute to sustainable development. In this context, we applaud the Secretary General for exercising leadership and thus reaching gender parity amongst senior management and Resident Coordinators. Namibia is fully committed to implementing Gender Equality, which is evident in the important role women play in politics. Women are equally represented in our Executive and Legislature. The participation of women at the highest levels of governance has been consolidated when the ruling SWAPO Party took a principled decision at the 1997 Congress 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, a key indicator of the importance we attach to Gender Equality. The late Secretary General Kofi Annan was right when he said, “Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance”. The world should do more to make gender equality a reality.

While we commend the Secretary General for his successful reform initiatives, may I remind this August Assembly of the historic pledge we all made during the World Summit held in 2005; a pledge “to strengthen the United Nations with a view to

enhancing its authority and efficiency” and, to “address effectively ... the full range of challenges of our time.” It is time to ensure we live up to that pledge.

In this regard, it is pertinent to demonstrate the political will of the UN Membership with regards to redressing Africa’s exclusion from the Security Council. The world has moved on, the old and unjust order cannot persist. Africa and its 1.2 billion inhabitants can no longer be excluded from assuming its place on this primary decision making body.

Madame President,

For Africa and, the rest of the developing world, peace is the main foundation and guarantor for sustainable economic growth and development. As leaders, together with the citizenry of the great African continent, we need to understand that it is our collective responsibility to maintain peace in order to enable Africa to unlock its full potential.

Every step that advances a peaceful Africa should be welcomed. In that vein, we commend His Excellency Abiy Ahmed, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia and his Eritrean counterpart, His Excellency President Isaias Afwerki for signing an agreement to end the war between their two countries and the subsequent resumption of diplomatic and trade ties. I am confident that this spirit of unity, peace and security, as embodied in the AU Agenda 2063, would be transplanted throughout the Horn of Africa and all parts afflicted by conflict in Africa.

Namibia is a child of international solidarity, midwifed by the UN. We relied on the solidarity of the nations of the world to call on South Africa to give us our right to self-determination. Equally, we call on the implementation of the UN resolutions and decisions, which will lead to a positive, peaceful and permanent solution that meets the aspirations and will of the people of Western Sahara. In the same vein, we reaffirm our support for the people of the Occupied Territory of Palestine, in their pursuit of self-determination, justice, freedom and independence, through political, diplomatic, peaceful and non-violent means.

During the darkest days of our fight for independence, the government and people of Cuba came to our aid, shedding their blood for our liberation, resulting in the consequential Battle of Cuito Cuanavale, which led to negotiations, elections and eventually, freedom. It is in this spirit of profound kinship we share with the Cuban people that we renew our call for the lifting of the decades old, outdated, ineffective and counterproductive economic and financial embargo of Cuba.

The time is now, for all of us, to demonstrate the leadership required to bring prosperity and peace to all the world's people. It is time to lead in the spirit of peace, in the spirit of equality and in the spirit of sustainability. It is time to make the United Nations relevant to all the world's people. Let us seize this unique moment in history.

I thank you.