

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. HAGE G. GEINGOB,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA AT THE
GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 72nd SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, President of the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly,

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,

Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Fellow Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

Mr. President, yesterday you made a profound statement in saying,

“The UN was created for people. Its job is to help people who are striving for peace and a decent life, on a sustainable planet”.

Namibia congratulates you on your election as President of the 72nd Session of this Assembly. We pledge our full support to advancing a people-centered approach to doing business in the United Nations. We also commend His Excellency Peter Thomson, for his excellent stewardship during his tenure as President of the General Assembly.

Your Excellency Secretary General, Yesterday, you stressed your commitment towards global unity and multilateralism by saying, “We call ourselves the international community. We must act as one, because only together, as United Nations, can we fulfill the promise of the Charter and advance human dignity for all”. As the people of Namibia, we will do everything within our capabilities to support your noble cause during your tenure as Secretary General of this organization.

We also congratulate Madam Amina Mohamed, a daughter of Africa, for her well-deserved appointment as Deputy Secretary General. Let us also not forget His Excellency Ban Ki Moon, for the sterling job he did during his tenure as Secretary General.

Mr. President,

Development that is not driven by the people and does not translate in improved living conditions for all people is a meaningless development. Moreover, development that does not reach all people in an equitable manner will only undermine the peace and stability necessary for sustainable development. Growing income disparities, between nations and within nations, poses the greatest threat for peace within countries and globally.

In Namibia, we overcame the inhumane scourge of colonial oppression and racial segregation. Through a deliberate policy of reconciliation, we succeeded in entrenching peace, security and stability as the pillars of our democracy. We also made significant progress in reducing absolute and relative poverty during the past 27 years. Poverty has declined from a high of 70 percent in 1993 to 18 percent in 2015. This was in part due to the introduction of a wide range of social safety nets that cover close to 16 percent of the entire population. While income inequality has also decline during the same period, it did not decline by the same magnitude as poverty.

We have come to realize that as long as we continue to have poverty in Namibia, even if just one percent, we can never have lasting peace and social justice. Similarly, as long as the wealth of the country is disproportionately in the hands of a few, we cannot have lasting peace and stability. It is for this reason that we have declared full-scale war against poverty and income inequality. Similarly, we have declared full-scale war against corruption, because corruption is one of the root causes of poverty and inequality.

In line with the belief that people must be at the centre of development, we have coined the phrase, “no Namibian should feel left out”. The logic is simple, for inclusivity spells harmony and peace, whereas exclusivity spells disaster, conflict and potential war. We, therefore, commend you, Mr. President, for the choice of theme for this Session “Focusing on people: striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet”.

Mr. President,

In a climate of ever increasing uncertainty and unpredictability, it is incumbent on world leaders to renew faith in multilateralism. The United Nations matters most, because it is at the center of the needs and desires of humanity. Therefore, it must be inclusive by including Africa at the highest decision-making level. By failing to do this, the UN stands at risk of losing its respectability. The only sure way to restore trust in the UN will be for the Security Council to become more inclusive.

The people of Namibia can testify to the importance of multilateralism. Namibia is a Child of International Solidarity, conceived by valiant patriots, delivered by Resolution 435 and midwived by the United Nations. Today, thanks to the support of the international community, we are an independent Nation, founded upon the principles of Democracy, Unity, Stability, Peace and the Rule of Law.

Mr. President,

People centered development should not only extend to a small part of the population. It must cover all demographic components. Too often, the largest demographic component in our societies, namely our mothers, sisters and daughters are excluded from development. We, in Namibia, believe that gender equity is equally important for a stable and harmonious society. In this regard, a policy decision by the ruling party to introducing a 50-50 representation at all party levels has led to a significant improvement of the representation of females, to 48 percent in Namibia's National Assembly. This is the second highest level of representation on the continent and among the top five in the world. To give further meaning to this policy directive, women have also been appointed in key positions in the Executive. These include:

- The Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, who is also the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation;**
- The Minister and Deputy Minister of Education Arts and Culture;**
- The Minister and Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology;**
- The Minister and Deputy Minister of Urban and Rural Development; and the Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration.**

Another significant demographic component that we must not neglect is the youth. In Namibia, we value the empowerment of the youth. Many of the so-called older guard, have been groomed and well prepared in the structures of the ruling party and Government before they were assigned higher responsibilities. This practice continues with a number of deputy ministers that are youthful, while our Attorney General is one of the youngest on the continent. Very soon, the last crop of the “Tanganyika Group” including myself will make way for the new breed.

Mr. President,

When we adopted Agenda 2030, and acceded to the 2015 Paris Agreement, we not only reaffirmed the centrality of multilateralism, but we also reaffirmed the reality of climate change. What happened in Sierra Leone, the Caribbean and some parts of the United States is a grim reminder that Climate Change is real. We witnessed the stripping away of human dignity, security and hope. We must therefore increase our resolve to address the challenges of climate change.

Mr. President,

To achieve the ambitions of living on a sustainable planet, peace processes and international peace building must be strengthened. We also recognize the contribution of women in promoting global peace, both in peace negotiations and active participation in peace missions. Namibia supports efforts to increase the representation of women in peace missions around the world, especially in leadership capacities.

Out of 52 UN peacekeeping and special political missions, 26 are in Africa. Therefore, we recognize the institutional partnership between the UN Security Council and the African Union in the maintenance of international peace and security. This not only enhances cooperation between the two institutions, but also adds greater legitimacy to the decisions taken by the Security Council on Africa.

Africa should not only be seen as a source of precious primary commodities, but an important and equal partner of the international community, with a contribution to make. In this context, we welcome the recent agreement between the Secretary General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, to enhance coordination between the Africa Union and the United Nations.

Mr. President,

Namibia stands together with the international consensus that the Israeli occupation of Palestine must end. We reiterate that statehood and independence are the national, inalienable, and legal rights of the Palestinian people. We therefore join the call for the two-state solution to be pursued with renewed vigor and determination. Similarly, the people of Western Sahara cannot continue to have their inalienable rights to self-determination and national independence denied. Namibia, therefore, reaffirms its full and unequivocal support for the inalienable rights of the People of the Western Sahara to self-determination. We call upon for the urgent implementation of all Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, with the aim of holding a free and fair referendum in Western Sahara.

Mr. President,

Over the past several years, Namibia has been noting the growing rapprochement between Cuba and the United States, culminating in the reopening of embassies between the two countries. We believe that this rapprochement should lead to the full lifting of economic and financial embargo against the Republic of Cuba and its people, who have the right to pursue peace and a decent life.

Mr. President,

Namibia is committed to supporting this organization to achieve global peace. As Albert Einstein once said, "Peace cannot be kept by force, it can only be achieved through understanding". Let us, therefore, try to be more tolerant by embracing diverse views through dialogue and understanding, before hastily embarking on a path of force, which will only lead to conflict and eventually war.

The United Nations is a great social experiment which features small and large nations coexisting in peace and harmony. If the United Nations did not exist today, I would definitely call for such an organization to exist. Let us continue to treasure the unity of the United Nations, for it is only through unity, that we will bring about a world free from fear and conflict. It is only through unity, that we will bring about a world free from hunger and poverty. It is only through unity, that we will deliver a sustainable planet for our children and their children.

I thank you for your kind attention!