

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

Like those who preceded me, I would like to congratulate you, and other members of the bureau, on the excellent manner in which you have conducted the work of the ECOSOC, especially this Segment. Namibia aligns herself with the statement delivered by the representative of Jamaica, on behalf of the G.77 and China.

Mr. President,

According to the Secretary General UN conferences and summits held, during the last decade, in the economic and social fields, have generated an unprecedented global consensus on a shared vision for development. The MDGs and other development goals are inter-linked and mutually re-enforcing, as such they must be addressed in a comprehensive manner. In September this year, the world leaders will review and assess progress made in the implementation of commitments made at these fora. Hence today's theme could not have come at a more opportune time as it presents us with an opportunity to advance the cause of development by contributing towards the September Summit.

The Secretary General's report reveals that progress in the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, has been slow and unevenly distributed, depending on regions and countries. The picture is especially grim for many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. In the case of Namibia, the results are also mixed, we have made significant progress in certain areas, moderate in some and yet in others, progress has been slow.

Poverty eradication has been at the center of our national development policies and strategies. In 1998, two years before the MDGs were agreed upon, Namibia adopted a Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), followed by a comprehensive Poverty Reduction Action Programme, covering the period 2001-2005. It is based on Namibia's key strategic documents, the Second National Development Plan (NDPII), and Vision 2030, both of which are compatible with the MDGs. As part of implementation of the Programme, Namibia has recently launched and embarked upon a Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA). The Assessment exercise has already been completed in three of our thirteen regions and will soon be extended to the remaining others during the financial year 2005/6. The outcome

of these assessments will be utilized in the formulation of the Third National Development Plan (NDP3) 2006-2011 and the Regional Development Plans.

Mr. President,

My government has long recognized education as the key to sustainable development. Namibia's 2004 MDGs Report indicates progress made towards making basic education free and accessible to all, with net enrolment rate exceeding 87% and showing gender parity. According to the 2003 UNDP Human Development Report, Namibia is ranked among eight countries in the world that spend the highest share of GDP on public expenditure in education.

Namibia is among the few countries in Africa that maintain social safety nets, in the form of grants, for vulnerable groups such as senior citizens, orphans, people with disabilities and war veterans. The majority of our population lives in rural areas and their livelihoods depend on agriculture, therefore, apart from the provision of social services, the country has embarked on rural infrastructure development, which requires development assistance. We have also made good progress in the provision of safe drinking water, in which our target of providing 80% of the rural and 95% of urban population with safe drinking water by 2006 has already been achieved. Our National housing programme, "the Build Together", targeting especially low-income groups, won a UNHABITAT award.

Provision of healthcare and services is another priority of our government. The country has been ranked number two, in sub-Saharan Africa, in terms of per capita expenditure in the health sector. Our main focus is on combating HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other communicable diseases. HIV/AIDS has been the leading cause of death since 1996, and also the single biggest threat to sustainable development as it diverts attention and resources from other sectors. The epidemic has, somewhat stabilized, though prevalence is still alarmingly high. Recent statistics also show that crude HIV prevalence ratio among women declined from 22% in 2002 to 19.8% in 2004.

In the area of gender equality and the empowerment of women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, are reinforcing instruments to our national constitution. Our constitution acknowledges that gender equality and women empowerment are prerequisite for democracy and sustainable development. Other gender responsive national frameworks include, among others, the National Gender Policy, National Gender Plan of Action, the Affirmative Action Act, the Combating of Rape Act (which also recognizes marital rape), the Married Persons Equality Act, etc. It is worth noting that currently, the percentage of women in

decision-making, at political level, stands at 34.7 while 26.9% for women parliamentarians in our bi-cameral parliament.

Mr. President,

As a developing country located in an arid region, where drought and high climate variability are endemic, and where demands are placed upon natural resources, environment protection is enshrined in the Constitution and sustainable development is a cornerstone of our Vision 2030. Combating desertification, land degradation and loss of bio-diversity are also high among national strategies for fighting poverty. Being particularly vulnerable to climate change, the government's efforts on mitigating the above-mentioned factors, includes capacity building for the management of natural resources both at national and the local community levels.

Mr. President,

As one of the youngest and stable, market economies in Africa, Namibia provides an enabling environment. for investment. We uphold the principles of democracy, human rights, transparency and good governance. Our policy is that corruption, in all its manifestations, is a cancer that needs to be removed. To that end, our Parliament has recently enacted **an Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Act**, which became operational as from April 2005.

Mr. President,

While there has been tangible progress on many fronts, our efforts are being hindered by factors, many of which are beyond our control. These factors include the triple effects of the HIV/AIDS, poverty and food insecurity. The effects of these spread across all the sectors of our society.

Namibia is classified as a lower middle-income country, based on the annual average per capita income. However, in reality, Namibia has one of the highest levels of income disparities in the world, due to the legacy of apartheid. Although enormous strides have been made to eliminate the huge discrepancies in population incomes we are still faced with a gini-co-efficient of 0.7.

It is for this reason that more than 80% of the population cannot be classified as middle-income citizens and the GDP per capita figure that gave rose to Namibia

being classified as middle-income country are grossly misleading. Due to this unfair classification, the ODA to the country has declined as many donors have either reduced or totally discontinued their assistance to Namibia. The need for external support still remains, while we express appreciation for the assistance from development partners, we appeal to the international community to continue to support and strengthen the efforts of our government.

The United Nations has been one of our reliable development partners, however, we are concerned that recent studies commissioned by the Secretary General do not adequately address the needs of middle-income countries, like ours. Therefore, if these countries are expected to meet the 2015 and other development targets, the international community should provide them with the assistance commensurate with their development needs.

Namibia like other developing countries lacks both the human and institutional capacity to deal with development issues especially in trade, mobilization of resources and service provision, among others. The country also lacks appropriate technologies, especially ICT that promote development. As for Globalization, it may have presented opportunities for some, but for us, it presents more challenges than opportunities. We therefore urge the September Summit, to take concrete steps to ensure that countries like ours are not left behind in the globalization process and in the achievement of the development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

I thank you.