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**STATEMENT  
BY  
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AMBASSADOR & PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**AT**

**THE 56<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMISSION  
ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

**NEW YORK  
29 FEBRUARY 2012**

## Chairperson

On behalf of my delegation I wish to congratulate you and other members of the Bureau for steering the work of this session. My delegation looks forward to the fruitful outcome of this session and wishes to pledge our full cooperation and support.

My delegation would also like to thank the Secretary-General for the reports submitted on the priority theme, which will surely facilitate our discussions.

Namibia associates itself with the statements made by Algeria on behalf of the group of 77 and China, Tunisia on behalf of the African Group and Angola on behalf of the SADC Group.

## Chairperson,

Namibia welcomes this year's priority theme, entitled "**The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges**", which offers us a tremendous opportunity to devote our discussions on feasible ways to empower rural women to overcome hunger and poverty.

Women and particularly rural women constitute the large segment of the Namibian population. A large percentage of this population lives in poverty and heavily relies on subsistence farming.

In the effort to empower rural women to overcome their plight, the Namibian Government through the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare launched the African Women Decade, the Namibian chapter in 2011, with the theme "*Grassroots Approach to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment*". This theme is in line with the CSW theme. At national level, this theme ties in with the main goals of the fourth National Development Plan (NDP4) **which are (1) to sustain and increase economic growth, (2) to reduce income inequality and (3) to reduce extreme poverty.**

The African Women Decade has revived and gave momentum to the national gender agenda with emphasis on issues affecting women such as escalating Gender Based Violence incidences, teenage pregnancies, high unemployment rates especially among young women, maternal mortality and morbidity, HIV

and AIDS prevalence among young women, and a decrease in women representation in politics and decision-making positions.

**Chairperson,**

Namibia also established the Women in Business Association (NWBA), a project that speaks to the SADC initiative on Women's Economic Empowerment framework. The Namibian Women Business Association aims at achieving an inclusive sustainable economic growth in all 107 constituencies and ensures equal opportunities, benefits and access to resources.

The Government further coordinates the participation of rural women in business trade fairs at national, sub-regional and international levels. Trade fairs provides opportunities for rural women in business, exposes them to new and appropriate production technologies and creates a forum for exchange of ideas, knowledge and experiences for business expansion and networking.

**Chairperson,**

Namibian women faced adverse challenges in accessing financial assistance and or loans, particularly due to the lack of collateral. To address this predicament, the Government of Namibia manages a credit guarantee scheme that supports small-scale innovative ideas to generate income for community members especially women in rural areas.

The Government further embarked upon the land reform and resettlement programme that allow women to acquire loans through the Affirmative Action Loan Scheme. To date, 28 percent of women have benefited from this programme.

Furthermore, income-generating activities in areas of small scale livestock farming, gardening, aqua-culture, small scale mining, community based natural resource management and conservancies are made available to women.

**Chairperson,**

Besides all these interventions rural women and girls are still facing gender specific constraints to have access to productive resources, such as land, finance, information, extension services and technologies. Additionally, women bear the disproportionate burden of caring and supporting those living with and affected by HIV and AIDS, which diminishes their chances to get involved in socio-economic development programmes.

## **Chairperson**

In conclusion, Namibia believes that, while poverty and hunger eradication constitute a national responsibility, these cannot be successfully achieved without the collective commitment and efforts of the international community. Therefore, international cooperation must be enhanced, including the fulfillment of commitment of internationally agreed official development assistance, market access, capacity building and technical support.

I thank you!