



Permanent Mission of the Republic of Namibia to the United Nations

360 Lexington Avenue, Suite 1502, New York, NY 10017

Tel: (212) 685-2003 • Fax: (212) 685-1561 • E-mail: namibia@un.int

Please Check Against Delivery

STATEMENT

BY

**AMBASSADOR FRIEDA N. ITHETE
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA TO THE UN**

AT THE

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC & SOCIAL
COUNCIL ON THE CURRENT FOOD CRISIS**

**NEW YORK
20 MAY 2008**

Mr President

My delegation expresses its gratitude to you for organizing this Special Meeting of the Council to exchange views on the current food crisis that is threatening to push many households back into poverty. The meeting is timely, coming on the heels of the establishment by the Secretary-General of a task force to deliberate on the crisis and hopefully come up with concrete implementable recommendations. We associate ourselves with the statement by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the G77 and China.

Mr President

The current food crisis comes at a time when we are halfway to the target for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This is the time when the international community is supposed to intensify its efforts at supporting developing countries to achieve the MDGs. However, the current skyrocketing prices of basic foodstuffs has left many households unable to place food on the table. This situation, which is also being worsened by high oil prices and harsh weather conditions, threatens to reverse the gains we have achieved vis-à-vis the achievement of MDG 1, that is the eradication of poverty and hunger and if not addressed properly, it could develop into a threat to international peace and stability as the saying goes that “a hungry man is an angry man”.

Mr President

Namibia, being an arid country, imports close to half of its domestic food requirements. For instance, for the 2008/2009 market season, our domestic requirement is estimated at 309 000 tonnes while our output is forecast at 125 000 tonnes. This translates into a deficit of about 184 400 tonnes. We are therefore alarmed at news that a number of food producing countries around the world have already put in place mechanisms to restrict food exports while some of their citizens are hoarding food in order to artificially influence the market and then sell at killing prices. In this regard, while the Council should call on governments to increase their investment in agriculture to expand productivity, it should also discourage the practice of hoarding food while people are starving. Council should also call on international financial institutions to scale up their lending to agriculture.

Mr President

While we welcome all emergency measures to save the lives of those who are being directly threatened by the crisis, we also advocate for long-term solutions. In this regard, our Government has taken a number of measures to increase agricultural productivity, taking into account our country's unique situation. These include the Green Scheme Programme that promotes the development of irrigated agronomic production aimed at increasing the contribution of agriculture to the country's GNP. The Green Scheme Programme is also aimed at achieving a high degree of social development and uplifting those communities located within suitable irrigation areas. A Horticultural Production, Marketing and Processing Initiative, through which the Government intends to increase local production, marketing and processing of fruits, vegetables, livestock fodder and other horticultural products to lessen dependency on imports and promote value addition, goes hand in hand with the Green Scheme Programme. The Government has also invested in the construction of strategic storage facilities to minimize shortages in the future.

Other measures to boost agricultural production are the subsidization of agricultural inputs, such as ploughing services, provision of fertilizers and quality seeds for small-scale farmers. Agricultural extension services have also been decentralized to make them easily accessible to farmers. However, lack of market access for agricultural products places a constraint on the performance of this sector and is a discouraging factor to producers in developing countries. In this regard, we call on developed countries to remove their trade-distorting agricultural subsidies and for the conclusion of the Doha Round of trade negotiations with development at its center.

In conclusion, Mr President, the recently concluded sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development also debated the issue of food crisis. One of the issues that kept on being repeated was whether the production of biofuels would not cause food insecurity as farmers turn their land on producing those crops that are used in producing biofuels and neglect food. Council may wish to engage more in this matter so as to provide guidance to the world.

I thank you.