

**REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**



**REMARKS BY MRS. PENEHUPIFO POHAMBA, FIRST LADY OF  
THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE 54<sup>TH</sup>  
SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

***REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM OF ACTION (BPFA)  
AND THE OUTCOME OF THE 23<sup>RD</sup> SPECIAL SESSION OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY***

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Chairperson

I wish to congratulate you and the members of the Bureau for your able leadership in steering the work of this Commission. Above all, your continued commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women deserves special commendation. My delegation looks forward to fruitful outcomes from this session and wish to assure you of our full cooperation and support.

Namibia is a signatory to international, continental and regional instruments such as Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; and the UN Convention against Transnational Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (the Palermo Protocol).

It is also a signatory to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and SADC Addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Children to mention but a few.

The Government of the Republic of Namibia expended significant resources in setting up a national legal framework for the advancement of women. The Namibian Constitution guarantees equality of women, and recognizes the need to advance the position of women in the Namibian society. Article 10 of the Namibian Constitution states that "*all persons are equal before the law and that no one should be discriminated against on the grounds of sex, race, colour, ethnic group, religion, creed or social and economic status*".

In addition to the Constitution, national gender related laws and policies were enacted, such as, the Married Persons Equality Act No. 1 of 1996; the Affirmative Action (Employment) Act (No. 29 of 1998); the Maintenance Act No. 9 of 2003; Communal Land Reform Act No. 5 of 2002; Labour Act No 11 of 2007; Combating of Rape Act No. 8 of 2000; and Combating of the Domestic Violence Act No. 4 of 2003.

Two years after Beijing (1997) the Namibian Parliament adopted the National Gender Policy and its Plan of Action as a guiding document to enable line Ministries to mainstream gender into their programmes and policies. The policy has identified ten critical areas of concern.

These are: (i) Gender, Poverty and Rural Development; (ii) Gender Balance in Education and Training; (iii) Gender and Reproductive Health; (iv) Violence against women and children; (v) Gender and Economic Empowerment; (vi) Gender Balance in Power and Decision Making; (vii) Information, Education and Communication; (viii) Gender and Management of the Environment; (ix)The Girl-child and (x) Gender and Legal Affairs.



With regard to *Violence against women and children*, the number of Women and Child Protection Units (WCPUs) has been increased from three units to fifteen units in all thirteen regions. These units have adopted a multi-sectoral approach to assist GBV victims. Service providers have been trained on how to handle GBV cases and Media Practitioners have also been sensitised on how to report on GBV. A National Zero Tolerance Campaign for GBV was launched in July 2009 as part of our Government's effort to raise awareness to this social ill.

A knowledge, attitude and practice study on cultural practices that perpetuate or protect women and children from GBV was conducted in 2007. A National Rapid Assessment study on human trafficking was also conducted in April 2009. The National Advisory Committee on GBV consisting of all stakeholders has been established to advise the Ministry on issues pertaining to GBV in the country. The Ministry is in the process of developing a national GBV Plan of Action and its monitoring and evaluation policy.

On *Gender and Economic Empowerment*, the percentage of women who own small and medium enterprises stand at 38% and women also account for 52.6% of those active in the informal sector. Government introduced through the Development Bank of Namibia a micro-finance scheme to empower grass roots women who could not access loans due to lack of collateral. Government furthermore instituted a Credit Guarantee Scheme to enable women and men to get access to loans from commercial banks.

In *Gender Balance in Power and Decision Making*, we noted that at independence in 1990, the proportion of women in Parliament was 8%. This has risen steadily over the years. Currently (2009) Namibia stands at 31% of women in Parliament (National Assembly and National Council). As per SADC regional ranking of women in parliament, Namibia is ranked 4<sup>th</sup> while globally Namibia is ranked 31<sup>st</sup>. Progress can also be seen in positions held by women. For example the post of the Deputy Prime Minister is held by a woman and key Ministries such as Finance, Justice, and Environment and Tourism are headed by female ministers. At political party level, the Secretary General of the ruling party, the SWAPO Party, is a woman.

Women representation in Local Authority stands at 45% and this is largely attributed to the affirmative action clause within the Local Authority Act No 23 of 1992, which makes provision for a zebra list. Following the implementation of Affirmative Action (Employment Equity) Act no 29 of 1998, women senior managers in the public and private sectors stands at 33%.

In 2009 Government, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, embarked upon the process of revising the National Gender Policy. The revised Gender Policy seeks to create an enabling environment for different sectors to mainstream gender.

It focuses on 12 areas of concern, which include (i) Poverty and Rural Development; (ii) Education and Training; (iii) Reproductive health and HIV/AIDS; (iv) Gender Based Violence; (v) Trade and Economic Empowerment; (vi) Gender Governance and Decision Making; (vii) Research, Media, Information and Communication; (viii) Management of the Environment; (ix) Issues of the Girl-child; (x) Gender, Peace Building, Natural Disaster and Conflict Resolution; (xi) Gender Legal Affairs; and (xii) Human Rights.

Chairperson,

In conclusion, I wish to point out that the Government of the Republic of Namibia is committed to the achievement of the gender equality goal, and to a Namibia where all women are empowered and are taking their rightful place in all sectors of the society. We will, as a Government, continue to monitor and evaluate the progress made