

**Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies
Distinguished delegates.**

On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Namibia, I would like to thank you for giving me the floor and since I am taking the floor for the first time, allow me to join those who spoke before me in congratulating you on your election to chair this Session and also on the excellent manner in which you are conducting the affairs of the meeting. With your vast experience and able leadership, we are confident of a positive outcome at the end of this exercise. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his informative reports on the issues we are considering at this Session of CSD.

Namibia aligns itself with the comments by the Honourable, Minister, Donald Buchanan, of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. As this is the first policy making Session of CSD and since the issues we are addressing here are of paramount importance to Namibia, allow me, to make a few additional comments on behalf on my country.

Mr. Chairman,

Choosing topic of this high-level segment, **Turning Political Commitments into Actions**, is not only appropriate but also timely. Being the driest country, in Sub-Saharan Africa, the importance of water and sanitation to Namibia could not be over-emphasized. Our national development strategies and initiatives such as the Second National Development Plan (NDP2) 2003-2008, Vision 2030, the Green Scheme, are all aimed at enhancing the socio-economic development and up-liftment of all Namibians, tailored to meet the MDGs. The Millennium Development Goals targets, to halve the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and to halve the proportion of those without access to basic sanitation by 2015 are noble but demanding to Namibia. The Vision of the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, is to ensure that 80% of the rural population of Namibia receives water from improved systems by the year 2007. Currently, our rural water coverage has reached 75%.

The mandate of the Natural Resources and Rural Development sector in our Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, is to provide safe water to the whole population, to manage the resources according to the principles of equity and sustainability and to ensure that water provision contributes effectively to the development of Namibia's economy. We consider water management, water conservation, cost recovery and the sustainable utilization of water resources as of the utmost importance.

However, in view of the fact that, the government has limited capacity and also that many donors and private sector investors are not keen to invest in this area of water, the Government was left with no other option but to provide water on the basis of charging those who are able to pay and subsidizing those who are unable to do so.

Therefore, the Session should underscore the need for long term investment, by both donors and the private sector, in water related infrastructures. The idea of charging those who can afford to pay, while subsidizing those who cannot afford to, is a social responsibility to all of us. Namibia

recommends therefore that this should be one of the policies to be adopted by the 13th Session of the CSD.

Mr. Chairman

The Millennium Development Goals target on sanitation is particularly more difficult target to meet. Rural sanitation, coupled with sound hygienic practices, remains a global challenge and Namibia as a developing country, is no exception. Currently, 41% of the population has access to sanitary means of excreta disposal.

It is estimated that 61% of the Namibians live in rural areas but only 20% of them have access to acceptable means of sanitation, including good hygiene practices.

In this regard, we agree with the view that, without prejudice to the importance of addressing the three issues in an integrated manner, sanitation should be accorded a high platform and that institutional focal points at both national and international levels should either be established or strengthened.

Mr. Chairman

The Government of the Republic of Namibia has placed housing provision, especially for low-income groups, as one of its priorities areas. Our constitution provides for the promotion of equal access to adequate shelter, water, safe environment and other basic services, as integral parts of human rights. As part of this commitment, the government formulated, among others, a National Housing Policy. The Policy, which stipulates different roles to be played by various stakeholders, is currently under review to enhance greater participation, and contribution by all stakeholders. The national housing programme, “the Build Together” which has won a UNHABITAT award, has and continues to play a significant role in addressing the housing needs, especially targeting the low- income groups. I must register our appreciation to UN-HABITAT for their support and cooperation in this regard. Through this Programme, low-income groups were enabled to gain access to land, security of tenure and credit facilities. Emphasis for this programme is put on community participation in the construction of houses and sanitary facilities, which in turn, contributes to employment and the alleviation of poverty. In this regard, we fully support that policy options should stress the need for sharing of best practices among countries.

Despite these efforts, however, the rural-urban migration is on the increase, leading to population growth in the cities, a trend that is posing a tremendous demand on housing and other basic services in our cities and urban areas. For instance, it is estimated that there is an influx of about 600-1000 people into our capital city per month. To address this trend of rural-urban migration, the Government has identified new growth points, settlements and proclaimed them as villages or towns. We are therefore, of the view that our policy options should include proper measures to develop rural infrastructures, in order to reverse these and similar trends.

Mr. Chairman

The decentralization of decision-making power and service provision to the regional and local authorities is also enshrined in the Namibian Constitution. Through the decentralization process the people at the grass roots level are able to partake in the services and decision-making

processes affecting their lives. To ensure effective planning and implementation of the decentralization process, development committees have been established at local, constituency and regional levels. Among others, the Government provides incentives for the informal business sector in the form of credit guaranteed scheme. The small business entrepreneurs have access to financial institutions, where they can obtain loans to start their own businesses. Currently, the Government guarantees 80% of these loans. These incentives are in line with the principles of the Habitat II Agenda, the Global Plan of Action, as well as the aims and objectives of Agenda 21 to ensure sustainable development.

Despite all the government efforts, in providing the three services we are discussing here today, these efforts are being derailed by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the impact of which has potential to devastate our social and economic sectors.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me at this juncture reaffirm Namibia's commitment to the objectives contained in the Habitat Agenda, Agenda 21, JPOI, and all other goals, including the MDGs. We believe that our success, and that of the international community, will be determined by our actions towards achieving them.

Recent studies and reports indicate that these goals are achievable and that the world has enough time and resources to do, if only we change the way we do business. As we are preparing for the five-year review of the MDGs this year, Namibia would like to underscore the need to provide developing countries with financial assistance, capacity building both human and institutional, as well as appropriate technologies transfer to supplement their efforts in this regard.

I would like to conclude by reiterating the need for this session to adopt practical, action-oriented, and time-bound measures aiming at achieving the MDGs. Anything less will not *turn political commitments into action* but will instead lender this Session of CSD yet another talk-shop, and I am sure as elected leaders, we cannot afford to fail in this regard.

I thank you.