



Statement

By

Mrs Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah

Minister of Environment and Tourism

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Commission on Sustainable Development**

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Mr Chairman
Distinguished Ministers
Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me at the outset to congratulate you and the members of the bureau on the excellent way you have been guiding the business of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its 16th Session. My delegation associates itself with the Declaration of the African Ministerial Retreat of African Ministers and Heads of Delegation, the Statements delivered by the Delegation of Djibouti and Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the African Group and the Group of 77 and China respectively.

The themes of this cycle, agriculture, land, rural development, drought, desertification and Africa are very important to my delegation. Agriculture remains the mainstay of economic activities in Namibia as in most of developing countries. About 70% of our population is dependent on the agricultural sector although its contribution to the gross national product (GNP) remains minimal at about only 6%

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At Johannesburg the international community committed itself to increase support to the agricultural sector; to improve productivity with particular attention to small-scale and women farmers; to ensure food security and increase the access to adequate food and nutrition; and to develop Africa into a net exporter of agricultural products.

Namibia has taken a number of measures to boost agricultural production to, inter alia, enhance food security. 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, goes hand in hand with the Green Scheme Programme through which the Government intends to increase local production, marketing and processing of fruit,

vegetables, livestock fodder and other horticultural products to lessen dependency on imports and promote value addition.

The other measures to boost agricultural production are the subsidization of ploughing services, provision of fertilizers and quality seeds for small-scale farmers. Agricultural extension services have also been expanded to 107 constituencies of the country to make them easily accessible to farmers. However, lack of market access for agricultural products places a constraint on the performance of this sector. In this regard, we call on developed countries to remove their trade-distorting agricultural subsidies and for the conclusion of the Doha Round of negotiations with development at its center.

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As the report of the Secretary-General on rural development indicates, about 75% of the poor live in rural areas. It thus follows that rural development should be accorded highest priority on the development agenda of both governments and other stakeholders. We advocate for a holistic approach to rural development in which access to social and physical infrastructure and services plays a vital role. In this regard, our Government has undertaken various measures to address rural poverty. The rural water supply programme has enabled 93% of rural communities to have access to clean and safe water while the rural electrification programme has also covered a large proportion of rural centers. Households within a radius of five hundred metres of rural clinics, schools and other Government centers are connected to the electricity main grid free of charge and are only responsible for consumption costs. Health and education have expanded significantly in rural areas.

Rural transportation and information and telecommunication infrastructures continue to be improved. Indeed, mobile telephone services almost cover the entire country while landline telephone infrastructure has also been expanded significantly. Radio and television covers 95% and 65% of the population respectively.

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To diversify the rural economy the Government has also introduced a number of non-farming economic activities. Among these are freshwater aquaculture in which many rural communities participate for job creation, income generation and household consumption. Community-based management of natural resources such as community-based tourism whereby rural communities are empowered to establish and manage conservancies and benefit from visitors who go to admire wild animals and flora and fauna amongst others in those conservancies must be promoted. Some rural communities have also established and manage tourist camping sites for own benefits. Community-based Management of Forestry involves the participation of rural communities in taking care of forests and harvesting them in a sustainable manner.

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The current skyrocketing food prices calls for concerted efforts to increase investment in agricultural production, the transfer of technology and capacity building as provided for in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. The production of bio-fuels to minimize our reliance on fossil fuels and reduce the emission of green house gases is a welcome development. However, this should not be at the expense of food production and thereby compromising food security.

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Access to and ownership of land is crucial to any economy that depends heavily on agriculture. Our Government's land reform programme is making good progress though not as fast as we have wished. The process of acquiring land for the resettlement of the landless proves to be costly, as prices respond to the principles of demand and supply while those in possession of land attempt to cash in on Government's need. The gender dimension of land ownership is still far from being satisfactory, as traditions are hard to change but progress has been registered.

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Being a semi-arid country, Namibia is one of the countries experiencing the effects of climate change, which compounds the challenges of drought and desertification. We experience insufficient rainfall at times. At other times, we receive excessive rains and floods. Both situations pose a threat to agriculture and food security and contribute to land degradation and exacerbate desertification. Floods also destroy the very physical infrastructures such as roads and earth that drive rural development. In this regard, we call for adequate funding of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Furthermore, I wish to underscore the urgency for the immediate capitalization of the Adaptation Fund in order to finance our efforts to adapt to climate change.

It is important that Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kiyoto Protocol meet their obligations, including on mitigation and technology transfer. Namibia looks forward to participating in the negotiations towards a new commitment period.

I thank you.