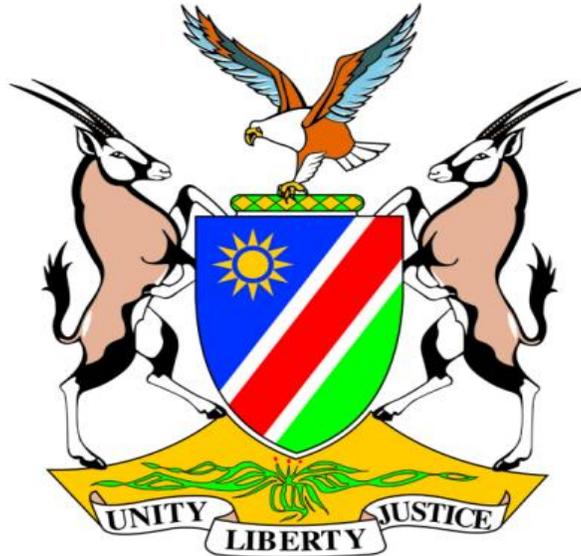


**REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**



**STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. HAGE GEINGOB, PRESIDENT  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA, ON THE OCCASION  
OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 10<sup>TH</sup> PAN  
AFRICAN WOMEN'S ORGANISATION CONGRESS**

**FEBRUARY 26, 2020**

**SAFARI HOTEL**

**WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA**

*Check against delivery*

- **Comrade Nangolo Mbumba, Vice President of the Republic of Namibia;**
- **Right Hon. Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia;**
- **Hon. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation;**
- **Honourable Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, South African Minister of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities;**
- **Mrs. Assetou Koite, President of the Pan African Women Organization;**
- **Hon. Doreen Sioka, Minister of Gender Equality and Child Welfare;**
- **Ambassador, Hawa Ahmed Youssouf, Representative of the AU Commission Chair;**
- **Madam Monica Geingos, First Lady;**
- **Madam Luzia Ingles Van-Dunem, Secretary General – Organization of Angolan Women;**
- **Esteemed Delegates;**
- **Members of the Diplomatic Corps;**
- **Ladies and gentlemen,**

**At the outset, I would like to express my appreciation to all of you, for having taken time, to come to Windhoek and grace this landmark event. Your presence here, is a testament to our collective commitment to ensure that**

**women empowerment in Africa gains traction and becomes commonplace in all spheres; from economics, education, human rights, and politics.**

**It is therefore, a special honour for Namibia to host the 10<sup>th</sup> Pan African Women's Organization (PAWO) Congress and indeed a pleasure for me to welcome you to Windhoek and hope you will have a memorable stay here.**

**We take pride in the fact that Namibia is a Founding member of PAWO. In 1962, Mama Putuse Apollos was a SWAPO delegate to the first PAWO Congress in Dar es Salaam.**

**Women have always played an integral role in the struggle of African people to attain human dignity. The bravery and fighting spirit of our women is aptly captured by one of our continent's foremost struggle icons, the late Comrade Winnie Madikizela-Mandela who said, "If you are to free yourselves you must break the chains of oppression yourselves. Only then can we express our dignity..."**

**Our history is filled with examples of women, who under difficult circumstances, fought to break the chains of oppression, as a means of obtaining human dignity. From Harriet Tubman and Rosa Parks in the USA, women who**

**fought gallantly for the abolition of slavery and racial segregation.**

**On home soil, daughters of Africa such as Chief Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Bibi Titi Mohammed, Mabel Dove-Danquah and Winnie Mandela, amongst other female luminaries, played instrumental roles in Africa's struggle for decolonization.**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

**There is a special symbolism to the 10<sup>th</sup> PAWO Congress being held under the theme "*Accelerate African Women's Action towards Achieving Sustainable Economic Development within the context of the UN Agenda 2030 and AU Agenda 2063*". This Congress is being held in a year that is highly significant. The year 2020 marks the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, a women's advancement blueprint, to which the women of Africa have made a significant contribution.**

**It will also mark the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the formation of the United Nations. These events are taking place at a time when the world has realized that only by investing in women's economic empowerment can we achieve gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive economic growth.**

**Given the prominent role played by PAWO in advocating for women's empowerment in Africa, on 21 February 2019, the African Union signed an agreement with PAWO recognizing it as a Specialized Agency of the African Union.**

**The decision to absorb PAWO as a specialized agency is in line with the January 2018 decision of AU Heads of State and Government to align 50/50 gender parity in the African Union workforce by 2025.**

**In Namibia, we have prioritized the issue of Gender Parity as a means of addressing historical imbalances and injustices towards women. In the spirit of "*No Namibian must feel left out*", we recognize that poverty eradication is not possible if we leave our female population behind. Women constitute half of our population and in this regard, Namibia has benefitted from the SWAPO Party's internal reform of its party list system, to include, 50/50 representation of men and women.**

**The top four in government also reflect 50/50 representation with our first female Prime Minister and a female Deputy Prime Minister.**

**Furthermore, women occupy strategic portfolios such as International Relations and Cooperation and the Higher and Lower education portfolios. We also have several women Deputy Ministers in key Ministries as well as other key-decision making positions. Our parliament comprises of 46% women.**

**Our advances in promoting the empowerment of women have not gone unnoticed.**

**In 2018, I was honoured to receive the African Excellence Award for Gender and last year (2019), the African Gender Index Award ranked Namibia amongst the top three countries promoting parity between men and women in terms of economic and social advancement, representation and empowerment.**

**This speaks to the fact that, in Namibia, we don't pay lip service to women's empowerment. Instead, we implement it.**

**Your Excellency,  
Ladies and Gentleman,**

**You may have noticed the contingent of uniformed staff in our midst this morning. They represent our brave Namibian women who have played their part in this transformative**

**Agenda through their contribution to AU/UN peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peace-building initiatives around the world.**

**Our National Gender Policy has been of paramount importance in developing the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security for the period 2019 to 2024. This plan enables direct and sustained attention to mainstreaming gender issues into the peace and security sector. In this regard, Namibia is in the process of establishing an International Women's Peace Centre, which will focus on national, regional international conflict resolutions and management activities, as well as aspects of mediation and negotiations.**

**With the first implementation report on Agenda 2063 having been released during the recently ended AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, it is encouraging to note that priority is now being placed, not only on representation of women but on sustainable economic development.**

**In this regard, I would specifically like to commend the recent call by my Brother, President Cyril Ramaphosa, that 2020-2030 be declared the Decade for African Women's Financial and Economic Inclusion.**

**This will be further augmented by the commencement of trade in the African Continental Free Trade Area in July this year and I encourage PAWO to work closely with the UN Economic Commission on Africa to identify opportunities for African Women in the areas of Trade and Investment.**

**Your Excellency,  
Ladies and Gentleman,**

**Women empowerment can no longer be a dream but a reality. Women empowerment can no longer be a goal but a daily practice. We must no longer talk of women empowerment but we must walk the path of women empowerment.**

**As global health advocate and sister of the African soil, Toyin Ojora-Saraki, aptly states, "An empowered woman is a productive woman, a health seeking woman, and therefore a woman who can be entrusted with the survival and wellbeing of herself and her family."**

**With this in mind it is crucial that the activities of PAWO are geared to empower our women, give them the initiative to become productive and healthy citizens of Africa, and in so**

**doing, entrust them to safeguard their survival and that of our entire African family.**

**In the same vein, let us not forget that the girl-child is the African woman of tomorrow. Therefore, her needs and aspirations should be integral to the activities of PAWO. Equally, the youth should be empowered in order for the continent to benefit from the youth's vast and untapped potential.**

**Indeed, if we are truly to harness Africa's demographic dividend, then we must ensure the full inclusion of women by continuing to call for greater agency, voice, and power throughout the private and political arenas.**

**As I conclude, I am reminded of the words of our sister the Former President of Liberia Ellen Johnson Sirleaf who said, "To girls and women everywhere, I issue a simple invitation. My sisters, my daughters, my friends; find your voice."**

**I therefore call on you, our sisters, our daughters and friends, to use this opportune occasion to find your voice and let the world know that this decade is the decade that our**

**African women will rise to the fore and assume their rightful role in the march towards African unity and prosperity.**

**On this note it is with great pleasure that I declare the 10<sup>th</sup> Pan African Women's Organization Congress officially opened.**

**I thank you.**