



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY
DEPUTY MINISTER HON HILMA NICANOR
AT THE VIRTUAL LAUNCH OF THE
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS
WOMEN'S NETWORK
23 SEPTEMBER 2021
WINDHOEK
NAMIBIA**

DIRECTOR OF PROCEEDINGS

**AIR MARSHAL MARTIN KAMBULU PINEHAS, CHIEF OF
THE DEFENCE FORCE**

DR WILHELMINE SHIVUTE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**MS. ANNE GITHUKU SHONGWE, UNITED NATIONS
WOMEN REPRESENTATIVE**

MR ELIAS MAGOSI, SADC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY,

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE DIFFERENT LINE MINISTRIES

**AMBASSADOR MORINA MUUONDJO, ACTING DIRECTOR
OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOMENS PEACE CENTRE,**

GENERAL OFFICES

SENIOR OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

ESTEEMED ORGANISERS OF THIS PROGRAM

MEMBERS OF THE MEDIA

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

GOOD MORNING

It is my distinct honor and privilege to join you at this very important virtual platform organized for the launch of the Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs Women's Network with the theme "Embrace Defence Women as agents of Peace." Let me begin by thanking you for having found time to attend this very special occasion where we are making official and concretizing, the idea of having a women's network in MODVA, and in general the peace and security sector.

We have converged through this unorthodox manner to not only launch this Women Network, but also celebrate a milestone for women in this great nation, particularly those in the military who have played pivotal roles in peace and security processes both at regional, continental and international levels.

Women in peace and security is not a concept foreign to Namibia, we have had a sizeable number of female members of the Namibian Defence Force deployed to serve in peace-keeping missions in countries such as Angola, Liberia, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Burundi, Darfur Sudan and Combodia since 1996. Currently, some female officers of

the Namibian Defence Force are deployed in Abyei and South Sudan.

In her speech at the UN Security Council in October 2015, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation's Hon. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah said, "Namibians recognize the link between peace and gender equality because of the many years of struggle for independence in which women participated fully."

Peace and security is defined as an essential factor of human life. A peaceful and secure environment is critical to every society since it affects all aspects of economic and social development in a country.

Since the United Nation's creation in 1945, there have been increasingly vocal campaigns by women's groups for the prioritization of gender issues. Consequently, key advancements have been made at regional and international levels.

Director of proceedings

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

When the world converged in Beijing, China, for the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, Namibia, participated as a sovereign nation and has committed to a positive and lasting contribution to international peace and security, informed by its own Liberation Struggle and the constitution of the Republic of Namibia.

Namibia signed and ratified regional and international instruments aimed at the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. We are also party to the Beijing platform for action, the UN security Resolution 1325 of October 2000, the UN agenda 2030, SADC 2063 Agenda to mention but a few.

At the National level Namibia passed laws such as:

- The Married Person Equality Act**
- The Combating of rape Act**
- Adopted the National Gender Policy and Plan of Action.**

Significant targets of Gender equality and empowerment of women have been met and measurable progress has been achieved. Pre-Independence Namibia was characterized by institutionalized discrimination which

was based on race, gender and some other forms of discrimination. At Independence however, Namibia adopted a Constitution which promised to eradicate all forms of discrimination. This is evidenced by Article 10 of the Namibian constitution; which states that;

- a. All persons shall be equal before the law**
- b. No person shall be discriminated against on the basis of sex, race, color, ethnic origin, creed or social economic status.**

In light of the aforesaid, the constitution of the Republic of Namibia set certain standards and legislative interventions as it relates to the empowerment of women and eradication of gender based discrimination. These legislative interventions need to be actualized in practice. The Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs is no exception.

Following intensive debates, consultations and research on the participation and involvement of women in peace and security, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted its landmark Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. This was subsequent to a realization that

including women and gender perspectives in decision-making, could strengthen prospects for sustainable peace and the protection of women from gender based violence. The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 addresses the particular challenges that women face in conflict settings. It mandates the protection of the rights of Women in Conflict and post-conflict situations. It's also mandates the participation of Women in the peace-keeping, peace-building, conflict resolution, post-conflict resolutions and decision-making processes. The Resolution also brought to attention the critical need to address sexual violence perpetrated in conflict settings, amplifying a call for enhanced global commitment to ensure that women and girls are more systematically and sustainably integrated into peace and security.

Additionally, the Resolution calls for the increased participation of women at all levels of decision-making across all institutions. It is worth noting at this juncture that, with a representation of 46% of women in Parliament, Namibia ranks 11th globally. This achievement is attributed to the ruling Swapo Party's deliberate 50/50

representation and zebra style initiative, which seeks to bring about gender parity.

In June 2018, Namibia was awarded an African Gender Award from the "Gender is My Agenda Campaign" Steering Committee in recognition of the progress we have made as a country, in promoting gender equality. At the award ceremony, H.E Dr. Hage Geingob stated that "In Namibia, gender equality is not a slogan. We breathe it, speak it, and live it. We do so, knowing well that men and women are peerless partners, who are supplementary to one another. We should leave no stone unturned in enabling the girl-child and women to reach their potential, express their creativity, and nurture their talent." With this quote of our President Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs must be seen to walk the talk.

With the successful establishment of The Namibia International Women Peace Centre which was launched by our Vice President H.E Dr. Nangolo Mbumba on the 31st October 2020, which was also the 20th anniversary of the UNSC Resolution 1325, Namibia has continued to lead the narrative of gender equity.

The Peace Center has begun the course of championing mediation, peacemaking as well as conflict prevention and resolution. It also focuses on advocacy on Women Peace and Security, networking and partnership and capacity building, as well as enhancing the capacity of national, regional and international actors in peace keeping. Women in the Defence sector in Africa, if not across the world, face similar challenges and prejudices, such as, limited and restricted training slots offered either locally or by sister forces, limited capacity building in specialized military fields and an injudicious belief that women cannot be sent to hotspots in the battlefield, among others. I am convinced therefore that, all these initiatives will alleviate these challenges and clear off the misconceptions.

Director of proceedings

Ladies and Gentlemen

The Namibian Defence Force and all other members of the Security Cluster in Namibia, if they are to fully realize the implementation of the UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women,

Peace and Security, are to establish and implement plans of the Women's Network. The MODVA Women's Network that we are launching today, will serve as an important networking platform for women in this ministry to engage other women with similar interests.

It is my belief that this network will promote, facilitate and strengthen the role of women in Defence as agents of peace and Security. Moreover, the network will provide a forum for women to share their professional experiences, and openly discuss challenges they have and continue to face. In so doing, women will also come up with new mechanisms to combat such challenges in their work places and communities.

One of the striking objectives of the MODVA Women's Network is to accelerate the delivery of commitments of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and scale up actions for equal opportunity provisions at the workplace.

As alluded to earlier, key provisions on Gender equality are enshrined in the Constitution of Namibia which speaks to citizenship, affirmative action and freedom from discrimination, to ensure equal opportunities for women,

to enable them to fully participate in all spheres of the Namibian society.

Director of ceremonies

Ladies and gentlemen

Notwithstanding the fact that this is a women's network being launched, I would like to appeal to our women, to establish how men could be included in the network's activities and operations in order to level the plain field in addressing gender equality.

In addition to the already established efforts to strengthen the coordination of Namibian women in the Security cluster, I am proud to announce that the launch of the MODVA Women's Network is a step in the right direction.

May this Women's Network launched today, encourage women both in military and civilian components of the Security Cluster, to be confident in their abilities and contribute to an environment where women can meaningfully participate in the peace and security domain.

In conclusion ladies and gentlemen, it is now my singular honor to declare the Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs' Women's Network officially launched.

I thank you.