



Republic of Namibia

Speech

By

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**During the Opening of the Workshop to Sensitize
Namibian Parliamentarians on Disability as Human
rights, Social and Development issue**

22 October 2008

Programme Director

R.t Hon. Prime Minister - Cde. Nahas Angula

H.E. the British High Commissioner - Mr. Mark Bensberg

Hon Hendrietta Bogopane - Zulu, Member of Parliament

in South Africa

Hon. Members of Parliament

Board Chairperson of the Chechire Disability Namibia -

Hon Hartmut Ruppel

Representatives of Organizations of People with

Disabilities

Ladies and Gentlemen

All Protocol observed

It is a privilege to officiate at this historical event, the Sensitization for Parliamentarians workshop on Disability as a Human Rights, Social and Developmental issue.

The Government committed herself to accept persons with disabilities as an integral part of our population. This

is enshrined in the Constitution and Parliament ratified various international instruments and Conventions. This created a conducive environment that promotes the equalization of opportunities for people with disabilities.

Some important laws and conventions include:

the National Policy on Disability (1997); the National Council on Disability Act, No. 26 of 2004; the Ratification of the Continental Plan of Action concerning People with Disabilities; the signature and subsequent ratification during 2007 by Namibia of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and the Affirmative Action (Employment Act, 1998 (Act No. 29 of 1998).

The launching of the National Disability Council in terms of Act No 26 of 2004 with membership composed of people with disability and a representation of members from stakeholders leaves testimony to Government's total commitment in this regard.

Programme Director

The thrust of the National Policy on Disability requires that disability issues should be discussed at all levels of development and the state, from the President's Office right down to the local level. The National Policy on Disability, 1997, paved the way for persons with disabilities to be included at all levels of the Namibian society. With the establishment of the National Disability Council meant that line Ministries would be required to report annually to the Council on this activities related to disability programs.

Time has now come to put to actions requirements of International Conventions which we ratified. Thus, I commend the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social and Community Development for organizing and funding this important workshop in collaboration with Leonard Cheshire Southern Africa and VSO Namibia

I also wish to thank all those who made a contribution in one way or another to the success of this workshop. I trust that it will enhance, refresh and update the Parliamentarians on the subject of disability as a human rights, developmental and a cross-cutting issue.

Programme Director

I understand that this workshop would allow further communication between the different Stakeholders, Parliamentarians and Organizations of People with disabilities to keep track of contemporary disability issues as well as to monitor the outcome from the workshop. I strongly wish that we can generate all positive ideas that will create an environment that will leave no one behind in our country and that we all can live in a barrier-free society.

The current policy environment must be used to the benefit of people with disabilities, allow their voices to be heard and actively participation at all levels of Society.

Programs, at whatever level that are aimed at social, economic and political development must include, proportionally at least, people with disabilities .This will increase their visibility at all levels from decision making to implementation. Monitoring and evaluation is crucial in order to ensure that their needs and interests are addressed on an equal basis with the rest of Society.

Programme Director

Our commitment therefore expresses our focus on the abilities and potential of people with disabilities to be full and active members of our society who as equal citizens should be able to contribute to national development at every level they may choose. We have chosen to focus not on their disabilities, but instead on their abilities. This commitment to people with disabilities translates to us to provide equal education and employment opportunities, to ensure that our built environment, including the public transport system, information, health services are accessible to all.

Let Namibia take a lead on these issues be it at SADC, AU or international, that we practice what we documented in our laws.

I thank you.