

**Namibian-German Negotiations on Bilateral Development Cooperation**  
**Swakopmund, 21 - 22 November 2013**  
**Opening Statement by Alois Schneider, Head of the German Delegation**

Honourable Permanent Secretary [*Leevi Hungamo*],  
Ambassador Hückmann,  
Namibian Friends,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the name of the whole delegation, I would like to express our gratitude for the warm welcome to your country. And thank you very much for hosting these negotiations.

This is my first visit to Namibia and I feel blessed to be here. In the past 3 days, I had the opportunity to get just a brief glimpse of your beautiful country, but it made a lasting impression on me and already I want to come back.

I am sure that here in the beautiful seaside town of Swakopmund we will have intensive and productive negotiations and I am confident that the next 2 days will renew the foundations of our excellent and trustful cooperation.

As you surely know, we had Parliamentary Elections in Germany in September. Germany is now governed by a "grand coalition" between Christian Democrats and Social Democrats. The coalition talks are still under way and we expect the new government to be installed before the Christmas break.

The political landscape in Germany may have changed since the elections, but I can assure you: The strong base of our good and very close cooperation remains the same as ever. Our bilateral cooperation is characterized by friendship, trust and

excellent collaboration – but also by Germany's special responsibility due to our shared history.

We read a lot these days about other development partners reducing their commitment to Namibia because of its upper middle income country status. Let me assure you: Germany will remain a reliable partner for Namibia and will continue this fruitful partnership. However, Namibia's status as an upper middle income country also has an impact on the way in which we cooperate, and we will have the opportunity to talk about that during our negotiations.

We have even strengthened our presence in Namibia: Since January, we have two economic cooperation officers based at the German embassy in Windhoek. Our aim was to have more development policy know-how on the ground in order to make our development cooperation even more effective. We are happy with the results of this reform and hope that your impressions are positive as well.

We are very satisfied with the achievements of our cooperation in our three well-established sectors of cooperation: Management of Natural Resources, Transport, and Sustainable Economic Development.

Considerable success has been achieved. To mention just one example: In different programmes we have worked together to fight high unemployment in Namibia. Our collaborative programmes on labour-intensive road construction have created over 1,300 temporary jobs in the last three years. And as one critical success factor for employment creation is education, we are supporting vocational training – a German success story – as well as higher education. For example: Over 500 students graduated in civil engineering at the Polytechnic of Namibia since German-Namibian cooperation started in 2006. In 2013 the first graduates received their Bachelor of Civil Engineering at the University of Namibia.

Namibia's development since independence is impressive, especially with regard to its political and economic stability. This positive development has constantly been confirmed by international rankings – most recently by an excellent sixth rank out of 52 countries on the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance. With your National



Development Plan 4 you have set yourselves some ambitious goals in order to continue consistently on the path towards becoming an industrialized nation.

At the same time, challenges remain. We have followed the news about the alarming drought under which your country is suffering with great concern. The worst-hit households are to be found in what is already the poorest section of the population. This is yet further evidence that the poorest people are the most vulnerable to global climate change. We believe that fighting inequality and the impact of climate change are two of the most pressing issues for Namibia's future. Through our development cooperation we are trying to tackle those problems and support your efforts to improve the living conditions of the Namibian people. One example is our joint project for the adaptation of roads to climate change in northern Namibia. The overall objective is to restore the livelihoods of the people affected by the floods. The water drainage capacity of rural roads will be enhanced in order to guarantee accessibility between communities and to services even under extreme weather conditions.

We believe that the present negotiations offer a good opportunity to further focus the strategic orientation of our cooperation in the focal areas of Sustainable Economic Development and Management of Natural Resources. What are your priorities for the next few years? In what way can we best support you in reaching your goals under NDP 4? What should be the strategic course of action for our bilateral cooperation in the focal areas?

An overarching issue for efficient implementation and achieving sustainable development seems to be the question of capacity. In recent reports about "underspending" in government bodies, vacant positions were often stated as the main cause. Capacity constraints are also delaying some of our joint programmes; most notably in the education sector. I would like to learn from you how the Namibian government plans to tackle this important bottleneck. And how can German development cooperation support you?

One of the challenges in our cooperation is the acceptance and implementation of loans. The loan pipeline adds up to almost 100 million euros. I am sure you

understand that it is difficult for us internally to argue for further commitments without any indication as to whether Namibia is willing and able to use these loans. Therefore, we hope to reach consensus on this issue during these negotiations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We meet here today to discuss our joint projects and programmes and to agree on new German commitments for the next two years. We are prepared to commit a new amount of over 70 million euros for Technical and Financial Cooperation. We plan to continue our successful work with new commitments for labour-intensive road construction and for integrated park management, to highlight just two programmes. We are also ready to support innovative approaches like the establishment of an access and benefit sharing platform. We see great potential to valorize Namibia's immense biodiversity for the benefit of the population.

This year's commitment consists exclusively of grants. However, I have to emphasize that this is an exceptional situation and that we need to see a mix of funding which includes more loans and fewer grants in the medium term.

Last but not least, I would like to highlight that German support to Namibia does not only come through bilateral channels. Firstly, the European Union's cooperation programmes with Namibia include significant contributions from the German government. And secondly, Germany is engaged in intensive cooperation with the Southern African Development Community and I am glad to say that several of the agreed programmes with SADC benefit Namibia directly.

Permanent Secretary, Ambassador, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me assure you once again that Germany is highly interested in keeping up its constructive and successful development cooperation with your country. We look forward to continuing this fruitful and constructive partnership.

Thank you very much for your attention.