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STATEMENT

BY

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**AMBASSADOR, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

AT

**THE 56th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION
ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

NEW YORK

29 FEBRUARY 2012

Chairperson

On behalf of my delegation I wish to congratulate you and other members of the Bureau for steering the work of this session. My delegation looks forward to a fruitful outcome of this session and wishes to pledge its full support and support.

My delegation would also like to thank the Secretary-General for the reports submitted on the priority issues, which will surely facilitate and discuss them.

Namibia associates itself with the statements made by Africa, a group of 77 and China, Tunisia on behalf of the African Group and Angola on behalf of the SADC Group.

Chairperson

Namibia welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on rural women and their role in poverty and hunger reduction, development and current challenges, which offers us a tremendous opportunity to discuss and determine on feasible ways to empower women to overcome hunger and poverty.

Women and particularly rural women constitute the large segment of the Namibian population. A large percentage of this population lives in poverty and heavily relies on subsistence farming.

In the effort to empower rural women to overcome their plight, the Namibian Government through the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare are launching the African Women Decade, the Namibian chapter of 2010 with the theme "Grassroots Approach to Gender Equality and Women Empowerment". This theme is in line with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are (1) to sustain and increase economic growth, (2) to reduce income inequality and (3) to reduce extreme poverty.

The African Women Decade has revived and given momentum to the national gender agenda with emphasis on issues affecting women such as escalating Gender Based Violence incidences, teenage pregnancies, high unemployment rates especially among young women, maternal mortality and morbidity, HIV

and AIDS prevalence among young women, and a decrease in women's representation in politics and decision-making positions.

Chairperson

Namibia also established the Women Business Association (WBA), a project that speaks to the SADC initiative on women's Economic Empowerment framework. The Namibian Women Business Association aims at achieving an inclusive sustainable economic growth in an 110% consistency and ensures equal opportunities, benefits and access to resources.

The Government further continues to encourage the participation of rural women in business trade fairs at national, sub-regional and international levels. It also provides opportunities for rural women in business, exposes them to new and appropriate production technologies and creates a forum for exchange of ideas, knowledge and experiences for business expansion and networking.

Chairperson,

Namibian women face diverse challenges in accessing financial assistance and loans, particularly due to the lack of collateral. To address this problem, the Government of Namibia implements a credit guarantee scheme that supports small-scale innovative initiatives to generate income for community members especially women in rural areas.

The Government further embarked upon the Land Reform and Settlement programme that allow women to acquire loans through the Affirmative Action Loan Scheme. To date, 26 percent of women have benefited from this programme.

Furthermore, income-generating activities in areas of small-scale livestock farming, gardening, aquaculture, reforestation, mining and community based natural resource management are available to women.

Chairperson,

Besides all these interventions rural women and girls are still facing specific constraints to have access to productive resources, such as land, finance, information, extension services and technologies. Additionally, women bear the disproportionate burden of caring and supporting mothers and children affected by HIV and AIDS, which diminishes their chances to get involved in socio-economic development programmes.

Chairpersons

In conclusion, Namibia's development needs constitute a national responsibility, these cannot be successfully achieved without the exclusive commitment and efforts of the international community. Therefore, international cooperation must be enhanced including the fulfillment of commitment of internationally agreed official development assistance, market access, capacity building and technical support.

I thank you!