

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

NATIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT BY HON. TOM ALWEENDO
LAUNCH OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, WINDHOEK

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21 OCTOBER 2015

Honorable Speaker
Honorable Deputy Speaker
Honorable Members

Today we are living in a world that poses huge challenges to sustainable development. The majority of the billions of global citizens continue to live in poverty and thereby being denied a life of dignity. We know of the rising inequalities within and among countries. Unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, remains a major concern. Global health threats, more and intense natural disasters, violent extremism and other related humanitarian crises are now occurring on a more frequent basis. Climate change is probably one of the greatest challenges of our time and its adverse impacts undermine the ability of all countries to achieve sustainable development. All these challenges have the potential to reverse much of the development progress made in recent decades.

However, today's challenges can also be turned into opportunities. Over the last fifteen years since the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted, significant progress has been made in meeting many development challenges. For example, hundreds of millions of people in developing countries, especially, have been lifted out of extreme poverty; access to education has greatly increased for both boys and girls. But we also know that the progress made so far has been uneven, particularly on the African continent, where some of the MDGs remain off-track – especially those that are concerned with health matters.

In order to build on the successes of the MDGs, on the 25th September 2015, the 70th United Nations General Assembly adopted new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs will come into effect on 1 January 2016 for a period of fifteen years up to 2030. In total there are 17 SDGs and 169 targets that seek to build on the MDGs and complete what the MDGs did not achieve. At the heart of the SDGs are the people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership.

Poverty eradication in all its forms and dimensions is recognized as the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. This is the only way where people can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality. The agenda therefore calls for a global determination to ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature.

Hon. Speaker

The new agenda for sustainable development also put emphasis on protecting the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing our natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change. This is necessary for securing the needs of not only the current generation but also of the future generations.

The process of drafting the SDGs followed an inclusive process of intergovernmental negotiations. As a result, the SDGs are integrated and indivisible, global in nature and universally applicable - although taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development. The African Union, for example, crafted a Common African Position (CAP) that details Africa's development priorities over the next fifteen years. It is therefore satisfying to note that all the aspirations of the CAP are part of the SDGs.

The approach followed in the drafting of the SDGs is a major shift from that followed when the MDGs were drafted. The MDGs were perceived to be a top-down process dictated by the global North to cure the misfortunes of the global South. The process therefore lacked sufficient legitimacy, and contributed to a weak ownership of the MDGs among the UN member states. Accordingly, the new development agenda seeks to close the MDGs' identified gaps by bringing to the fore issues of structural economic transformation and inclusive growth. The development agenda recognizes the fact that for a sustainable economic transformation, there is a need to embrace science, innovation and technology.

The new development agenda does recognize that global peace is a necessary condition for achieving the SDGs. In this respect the agenda places prominence on fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.

The new sustainable development agenda calls for a total transformation of the global economy – especially in developing countries – through industrialization. The common African position on the new development agenda recognizes industrialization as key to Africa achieving the SDGs. Over the last decade Africa has seen a remarkable economic growth, becoming the fastest growing region in the world. This is despite the persistent global economic slowdown. However, for real economic transformation of the continent, Africa's economic growth needs to accelerate to at least 7%. To fully benefit from its rich natural resources and to reap the benefits of the demographic dividend, industrialization is therefore a must for Africa.

In order for Africa to industrialize, there is a need to invest heavily in the training and skills development, especially for women and the youth. This calls for a skills revolution, particularly in the areas that are catalysts to industrialization, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Hon. Speaker

One of the challenges that have been identified in the implementation of the SDGs is the lack of baseline data in many of our countries. Data is the lifeblood of decision-making and the raw material for accountability. Without high-quality data providing the right information on the right things at the right time; designing, monitoring and evaluating effective policies becomes almost impossible.

Accordingly, there is growing recognition that the success of the SDGs will depend on the ability of governments, businesses, and civil society to harness data for decision-making. This calls for investing in building innovative data systems that draw on new sources of real-time data for sustainable development. Without data that is fit-for-purpose, it will be difficult for countries to decide which of the seventeen SDGs to target first, let alone the monitoring and evaluation of the progress being made.

Fortunately today's technological capabilities make it possible to collect and analyze the data we need. Today it is easy to improve our data collection by creating real-time link between the provision of services and the collection and processing. This is especially so in the areas of health-care and education services. In this respect I am happy to report that we have improved our data collection with the establishment of the Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) three years ago.

Honorable Speaker

To conclude, I want to paraphrase His Excellency, Dr. Hage Geingob – who - at the occasion of the 70th United Nations General Assembly reminded us that *“through the United Nations, we have the platform to achieve this agenda. We can either choose to march to the original ideals that led to the formation of the United Nations or we can choose to pursue our ambitions at the expense of others and ourselves. Let us choose nobility, where we overcome our fears, insecurities and prejudices for the sake of shared sustainable development. Let us leave a*

long lasting legacy which will shape the future of our planet politically, economically and ecologically".

In choosing nobility in the pursuit of shared prosperity, the National Planning Commission, as the development coordinating institution will - in consultation with all relevant stakeholders - formulate a comprehensive SDGs domestication plan and strategy. The strategy will be accompanied by a roadmap with clearly defined, sector-specific milestones to be attained within agreed timelines. The actual commencement of these activities will be announced once our internal consultative processes have been finalized.

I thank you.

