

**JOINT DECLARATION BY THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF  
GERMANY AND THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

**“UNITED IN REMEMBRANCE OF OUR COLONIAL PAST,  
UNITED IN OUR WILL TO RECONCILE, UNITED IN OUR  
VISION OF THE FUTURE”.**

**Introduction**

The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Government of the Republic of Namibia, as democratically elected by the people of Germany and Namibia respectively,

- *Responding* to the Resolution of the National Assembly of the Republic of Namibia of 2006 and the Resolutions of the German Bundestag of 1989 and 2004,
- *Mindful* of the deep wounds inflicted on particular communities and other peoples of Namibia by the atrocities perpetrated during German colonial rule between 1904 and 1908, which echo down and through time and are still felt by Namibians today,
- *Recognizing* the need for development in order to address the lasting economic, social and psychological hardship of the communities most affected,
- *Underlining* the special nature of German–Namibian relations as stressed by Resolutions of the German Bundestag in 1989 and 2004 confirming a special historical and moral responsibility towards Namibia,
- *Recalling* the Motion of the National Assembly of the Republic of Namibia of 2006 calling for an amicable solution to the outstanding questions of the past,
- *Considering* the previous efforts by the German and Namibian Governments, as well as by churches and civil society to address the injustice of the past and strive for reconciliation,
- *Mindful* of the strong and cordial relations between their countries since the independence of the Republic of Namibia that include a very close network of contacts between citizens from all walks of life in both countries,

- *Recalling* the support for Namibia's independence, in particular the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 435 (1978) from the two states in Germany in the long Namibian struggle for independence, and from the united Germany to the development of Namibia thereafter,
- *Acknowledging* that the two Governments have enjoyed strong and cordial relations since the independence of the Republic of Namibia and wish to improve upon this relationship further,
- *Affirming* their firm resolve to maintain and strengthen their excellent bilateral relations and the need to urgently redress a dark past in order to build a better future,



*Jointly declare* the following:

## I.

1. In 1904, Germany waged a war, which annihilated large parts of indigenous communities that were residing in what is now Namibia. The German forces adopted and implemented policies to exterminate clearly identified communities. These measures also affected other communities of what today is Namibia.
2. In this context, Lieutenant General Lothar von Trotha issued an Order on 2nd October 1904 which led to the death and suffering of thousands of Ovaherero, including women and children. This Order was rescinded by the German Government on 8th December 1904, but by then, many thousands of Ovaherero had been killed and perished.
3. Notwithstanding the revocation of the first Order by Germany, Lieutenant General von Trotha issued a second Order on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1905. This was directed against the Nama and also threatened them with a similar fate to that of the Ovaherero unless they surrendered. These threats were later carried out, resulting in the further substantial annihilation of the Nama communities.
4. In 1905, German authorities created concentration camps, notably at Swakopmund, Shark Island and Windhoek (Alte Feste), in which the internees were enslaved and forced to work under inhumane conditions, resulting in the death of thousands of people from hunger, disease and forced labour. Some of the Nama fighters and their families were banished to Togo and Cameroon.

5. The severity of the conditions and the bleakness of life prospects in these camps were such that many internees were doomed to die. By the time these camps were finally closed in 1908, thousands of people had died from hunger, disease and exhaustion from forced labour.
6. In the aftermath of the war, large swathes of territory, constituting ancestral land historically inhabited by and belonging to indigenous communities, were seized and occupied by the German State. These actions led to the expulsion and displacement of indigenous communities from their ancestral lands. In some cases, communities were forced out of what today is Namibia itself and have remained uprooted to this day.
7. Furthermore, human remains of members of indigenous communities were removed unlawfully and shipped to Germany for pseudo-scientific racial purity and eugenic 'research' without respect for human dignity, cultural and religious beliefs and practices. The shipments also included cultural artifacts of these communities.
8. Overall, tens of thousands of men, women and children were subjected to the orders and associated German policies. They were shot, hanged, burned, starved, experimented on, enslaved, worked to death, abused, raped and dispossessed, not only of their land, property and livestock, but also of their rights and dignity.
9. As a consequence, a substantial number of Ovaherero and Nama communities were exterminated through the actions of the German State. A large number of the Damara and San communities were also exterminated.

## II.

10. Both Governments affirm that the Preamble to the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948) "recognises that at all periods of history genocide has inflicted great losses on humanity". The German Government acknowledges that the abominable atrocities committed during periods of the colonial war culminated in events that, from today's perspective, would be called genocide.
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### III.

11. On the basis of this acknowledgement, the German Government recognizes Germany's moral responsibility for the colonization of Namibia and for the historic developments that led to the genocidal conditions between 1904 and 1908, as described above, with its gross human rights violations and human sufferings thereof. On the same basis, Germany accepts a moral, historical and political obligation to tender an apology for this genocide and subsequently provide the necessary means for reconciliation and reconstruction.
12. The German Government further acknowledges the grave guilt incurred by individuals in positions of military and political responsibility at the material time and Germany's superordinate responsibility for their actions, particularly with regard to Ovaherero and Nama communities.
13. Germany apologizes and bows before the descendants of the victims. Today, more than 100 years later, Germany asks for forgiveness for the sins of their forefathers. It is not possible to undo what has been done. But the suffering, inhumanity and pain inflicted on the tens of thousands of innocent men, women and children by Germany during the war in what is today Namibia must not be forgotten. It must serve as a warning against racism and genocide.

### IV.

14. The Namibian Government and people accept Germany's apology and believe that it paves the way to a lasting mutual understanding and the consolidation of a special relationship between the two nations as affirmed by the two Bundestag Resolutions of 1989 and 2004, respectively. This shall close the painful chapter of the past and mark a new dawn in the relationship between our two countries and peoples. This relationship will be characterized by a much more thorough and meaningful process of reconciliation and reconstruction, an appropriate culture of remembrance, as well as a new level of political, economic and cultural partnership.

The Namibian Government deeply appreciates its friendly relationship with Germany, which also extends to numerous partnerships and initiatives launched from all walks of life.



V.

15. In view of the acknowledgment provided in Chapter II, and pursuant to the apology in Chapter III of this Declaration, the two Governments jointly decided to embark upon measures to heal the wounds of the past and create a lasting partnership for the future. Both Governments further decided on the need for a forward-looking special relationship framework that gives meaning to the letter and spirit of this Declaration and the resolutions unanimously adopted by the Bundestag and Namibian National Assembly.
16. A separate and unique reconstruction and development support programme will be set up by both Governments to assist the development of descendants of the particularly affected communities, in line with their identified needs. Representatives of these communities will participate in this process in a decisive capacity. Under this programme, projects will be implemented in the following regions: Erongo, Hardap, //Kharas, Khomas, Kunene, Omaheke, and Otjozondjupa. The projects will include the following sectors: Land Reform, in particular Land Acquisition, within the framework of the Namibian Constitution, and Land Development, Agriculture, Rural Livelihoods and Natural Resources, Rural Infrastructure, Energy and Water Supply, Technical and Vocational Education and Training.
17. Both Governments decide to promote and support reconciliation between the people of Namibia and Germany through preserving the memory of the colonial era, in particular the period between 1904 to 1908, for future generations by, inter alia, finding appropriate ways of memory and remembrance, supporting research and education, cultural and linguistic issues, as well as by encouraging meetings of and exchange between all generations, in particular the youth. Both Governments further decide to jointly develop and put into place a separate legal structure, i.e. a joint trust or fund in order to select and fund projects which aim to improve reconciliation.
18. The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany will make available the amount of 1100 (one thousand one hundred) Million Euros, as a grant to implement the envisaged projects within the framework of the above-mentioned programmes. Germany commits herself to allocate this amount over a period of 30 years.

Of this, the amount of 1050 (one thousand fifty) Million Euros will be dedicated to the reconstruction and development support programme for the benefit of the descendants of the particularly affected communities. 50 (fifty) Million Euros will be dedicated to the projects on reconciliation, remembrance, research and education.

19. The governing and implementation structures for both programmes will operate on the basis of the principles of equal partnership, joint decision taking, good governance and transparency as well as affected community participation. Provision will be made for monitoring of implementation, including audits and periodic comprehensive impact assessment at agreed intervals.
20. Both Governments share the understanding that these amounts mentioned above settle all financial aspects of the issues relating to the past addressed in this Joint Declaration.
21. Both Governments decide on the establishment of a Bi-National Commission, as a forward looking and lasting political framework for the consolidation of this special relationship between Germany and Namibia.
22. The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany renews her commitment to continue the bilateral development cooperation at an adequate level within the framework of the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development to contribute to the development of Namibia, as a whole and to the benefit of all Namibians.

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