

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



“Africa, the New Agenda for Peace and the Reform of the Multilateral System”

ADDRESS
BY
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**Director of Ceremonies,
Dr. Solomon Dersso founder of Amani African,
Distinguished members of high-level panel of experts,
Distinguished invited guest,
Members of the Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Let me take this opportunity to welcome you all to the Republic of Namibia, the Land of the Brave and Windhoek the capital city in particular. It is my hope that our deliberations will be fruitful and will chart a clear course of action towards the kind of reform of the multilateral system we want.

My profound appreciation and gratitude goes to the Amani Africa team for co-organizing this consultative meeting with the team in Namibia. I would like to emphasize that the reform of the multilateral system is a crucial issue for Namibia and the African continent. Hence there is demand for the UN to be reformed in order to ensure regional representation at UN Security Council.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This consultation, taking place in Namibia is of particular importance to us given our history. H.E Dr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia always makes it clear that “Namibia is a child of international solidarity, midwifed by the UN system” and it is a sentiment understood and owned by Namibians.

Namibia was one of those countries whose people were denied rights to self-determination. The people of Namibia fought to gain their independence, with the help of Southern Africa Frontline States, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) the UN and other multilateral organizations. Therefore, it was through the galvanization of the ordinary freedom fighters who were supported by the international community, which provided us with moral and material support that we managed to liberate our country from apartheid and colonial bondage and eventually attained our hard-won independence on the 21st March 1990. Therefore, our faith in the multilateral system grew out of our own experience. It is against this background that we believe the international community has an obligation to assist the people of Western Sahara and Palestine to achieve self-determination and independence.

Ladies and gentlemen,

To reaffirm our people's belief in multilateralism, the constitution of Namibia commits the state to pursue the policy that encourages the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means. Of course, it is worth emphasizing that handling international disputes through dialogue is part and parcel of the multilateral system, as encapsulated in the UN Charter, to save the succeeding generations from the scourge of war. Therefore, we need to reflect deeply and ask ourselves tough provoking questions on the type of multilateral system that would work for us and provide us with sustainable peace to spur socio-economic development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For us in Africa, partly it was this realization that prompted us to transition from the OAU to the AU and establish the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) for complementing and reinforcing through regional collective action the multilateral collective security system that is founded on the provision of the UN Charter. Africa remains a formidable bloc of 54 UN Member States plus Western Sahara. Therefore, we must continue to emphasize the need for an equitable regional representation on the UN Security Council. That is to say, the UN Charter must be amended to reflect the will and desire for Africa's Permanent Representation in the Security Council, making it possible for this multilateral body to serve the purpose in the interests of all peoples of the worlds. Namibia as a member of the AU Committee of Ten, Heads of State mandated by the AU Assembly to promote and canvass support for the Common African Position as enshrined in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration, will remain committed to the Common African Position without wavering. As the issue of the UN reform has and seems to take long, it is important for a body like yours being Africa's Think Tank on multilateralism to make a deep reflection on the matter in order to sharpen the AU negotiation team. We must not allow Africa to be undermined and be told that our demands are unrealistic while at the same time the historical injustice done to Africa continues unabated.

Our conviction has been that, as we pursue the reform of the UN Security Council to address the historic injustice imposed on Africa by its exclusion from permanent membership and veto power, we also need to bring our efforts together to share the burden of the multilateral system and contribute to the global public good of international peace and security through the APSA.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Besides the reform of the international peace and security architecture, it is also important to look at the development system as a whole, particularly the reform of international financial and economic orders. I am referring to multilateral bodies such as the World Bank, IMF and the World Trade Organization. There is no doubt that Africa's resources contribute enormously to global development. However, there is a negative perception towards Africa which is always viewed as a mere supplier of raw materials and not capable of value addition or any development of these materials.

Many countries, including Namibia have ably demonstrated that this is far from the truth. With the right resources and tools, we are capable of developing the natural resources we have right here on the continent. However, as part of the global village, we must accept the sharing of technology, knowledge, and expertise. That is something most in the global north seems to be reluctant to do. Therefore, there is a need to reflect on how the African resources are used to develop other nations. It is highly important to determine the needs of the African continent and to come up with workable proposals to address this unfair relation.

While Africa has abundances of resources, Africa has no say or little control in the global financial systems and international trade rules. Hence, there is a compelling need to reform the global economic trading and financial systems, to level the playing field. A fairer and more resilient multilateral trading system must be open, rules-based, transparent and non-discriminatory.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Indeed, while many of these challenges are not completely new, it is clear that they are bigger in scale, unfolding in the same timeline and tend to reinforce each other. They are also taking place at a time of major global power shifts and worrying geopolitical rivalries not only along old ideological divides but also rivalries pitting old against new powers and major powers against middle powers.

In this context, it may all seem for us in Africa that there is little we can do to change, this cannot be the case. For the continent of Africa, this would mean that our collective effort should go beyond presenting a good case for securing the interest of Africa. It should also include articulating proposals on how to reform the multilateral system in a way that it also meets the just expectations and needs of the whole of humanity.

I believe that we are capable of going beyond the usual and mobilizing such a thinking. This particular gathering and the process we have embarked on is meant to help us rise to this challenge and articulate perspectives from the people of Africa on how humanity can achieve the multilateral system and a world that we all want and deserve.

Our Founding President Dr Sam Nujoma has taught us that *“a united people striving to achieve a common good for all members of the society will always emerge victorious”*. I firmly believe that if Africa maintains unity of purpose and remains united, the continent will indeed emerge victorious in its quest for a proper place at the table of the family of nations.

Once again, I welcome you all to Namibia, and wish you all a successful deliberation in the coming two days.