

## Welcome Address

# Esther U. Muinjangué

## Chairperson of the Ovaherero Genocide Foundation (OGF)

Respected Traditional Leaders from Namibia present here

Honourable Members of the Bundestag with particular mention of Niema Movassat

Fellow compatriots in our just cause

Distinguished Participants

Academicians

Comrades and Friends

Ladies and Gentlemen

Members of the Media

It is gratifying to see you all present here filling up this hall to capacity. Your presence here does not only speak volume of internationalism and solidarity, but as much about the just and nobleness of the cause for the government of the Federal Republic of Germany to own up to its historical responsibility.

This is as far as its excessive use of military power, even against innocent women and children, which culminated in the genocide of the Indigenous people of the then German South West Africa, as Namibia was then known during the Imperial Germany's colonial occupation.

Often some conservative German academics, and some of their fellow apologetics in the developing world, has been referring to the valiant act of self-defence of my ancestors against foreign occupation and the confiscation of their land, and cattle as **mere rebellions**, and their eventual genocide as **mere atrocities**. This is irrespective of the fact that there were **two specific Extermination Orders against our ancestors, on October the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1904 against the Ovaherero; and on April 22, 1905, against the Nama.**

As a result of these two extermination orders **80% of the Ovaherero** were exterminated; and **50% of the Nama**. As we gather here today, a significant number of my fellow descendants are scattered all over the globe, especially in Botswana and South Africa, as well as in Cameroon and Togo where some of my ancestors were banished, and where today they have perished due to sickness, and/or were assimilated into the local indigenous of these two countries. Some of my fellow descendants of the victims of genocide from Botswana and South Africa, are today with us at this conference, and will relate their own trials and tribulations.

Let me kindly refresh you about some of the goals of this congress, which, as you may be well aware is:

- “to reflect on Ovaherero and Nama anticolonial resistance, the genocides 1904-08, their long-term impact and the past struggle for restorative justice for the Ovaherero and Nama genocides;”
- “to evaluate the recent developments and the present situation in Germany and Namibia with regard to the exclusion of Ovaherero and Nama from the genocide negotiations,” and
- “to affirm the right of the Ovaherero and Nama communities to be directly involved in negotiating a comprehensive solution, including recognition of the genocides, a sincere apology and just reparations.”

Compatriots, Fellow participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to be categorical with the reference to the “exclusion” of the Ovaherero and Nama from the so-called genocide negotiations. We need to put this notion of “exclusion” in its proper perspective. Because at no point ever have the Ovaherero and Nama considered themselves excluded from the ongoing genocide negotiations between our Namibian government, and its counterpart of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Because we are made to understand that the ongoing talks are “**about massacres and German investment in Namibia**”.

We in the progressive Genocide and Reparation Movement, have always been on record calling for a **trialogue among us**: i.e.

- i) the **Ovaherero and Nama**, including our **brothers and sisters in the Diaspora** as direct victims of the genocide;
- ii) the government of the **Federal Republic of Germany**, as successor to Imperial Germany’s government,
- iii) last but not the least, **our Namibian government**, especially, as a **facilitator** between the perpetrator and the Ovaherero and Nama,

Such **trialogue** has never been hatched nor has it taken place. Thus, the Ovaherero and Nama cannot be said to be excluded because what is going on currently are purely bilateral negotiations between two **sovereign states**.

And we have no desire to get involved in such. Testimony to this are the pronouncements last month by the Namibian President, His Excellency Dr Hage Geingob, while on an extended visit to the United States of America:

*“Geingob said the government would also seek German investment, including in wind farms, as a form of reparation for the Herero massacre in the early 20th century, when Namibia was a colony known as German South-West Africa. ‘Germans will come in a big way’ the president was reported as having said in an interview with Taylor Hall and Paul Wallace of the USA Bloomberg news. Is this not a categorical pronouncement by President Geingob? Then I don’t know what can be clearer than this. How this by any way stretch of imagination could be understood and interpreted in the context of our just cause, defies any logic.*

Compatriots, Fellow Participants,

In a nutshell, it is not a matter of us joining the current **bilateral talks** or negotiations

or whatever or however you may want to refer to the ongoing over-indulgences of the two governments.

We trust the **resolutions** that would emanate from the deliberations of this historic forum over the next two days would go a long way to get the **two governments to immediately stop the present reactionary shannigans they engaged in and honour the LETTER AND SPIRIT MOTION ON GENOCIDE AND REPARATIONS PASSED BY THE NAMIBIAN PARLIAMENT IN 2006.**

Simply stated, it called for the Namibian government to drive an initiative on GENOCIDE and REPARATION in the form of a TRIALOGUE, wherein it would be a *facilitator of direct talks between the victim groups and the successor to perpetrator of the crime - Imperial Germany, the government of the Federal Republic of Germany!*

All we are saying is:

When the government of the Federal Republic of Germany one day awakens from its slumber, illusion and self-delusion on the issue of **genocide and reparations**, we are always ready to talk to them. The German government knows very well who are **the legitimate direct descendants of the victims of genocide**, and **where to find us**.

We remain ever open to a **real triologue!**

Dear compatriots, Fellow participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Without being too much repetitive, in conclusion I wish to refer to the third and last goal of this august gathering I have cited right at the beginning of my opening remarks, especially, as it to refer to the right of the Ovaherero-Ovambanderu and Nama people as direct descendants of the victims. Because, as a people, we have as yet to exercise such a right.

**We are not waiting for any one to affirm our right on this issue. By own initiative we stood up and started to affirm such a right.** The right to speak for ourselves on the issue of **genocide and reparation**. Unfortunately both our Namibian government and that of the Federal Republic of Germany remain so far not only deaf but **intransigent**.

**BUT OUR RIGHT REMAINS INALIENABLE.**

With these few remarks I wish to welcome you all to this congress and hope that together we shall **craft out something in the context of the issues that I have just raised that would eventually compel the two governments**, and the **world at large** to, specifically, appreciate that our **right as direct descendants of the victim of genocide is inalienable**. And ultimately, to start seeing day-light and reinvigorated hope on this matter.

March on – A GENOCIDE AND REPARATION TRIALOGUE MUST START IN EARNEST!

FORWARD EVER - BACKWARDS NEVER! **I THANK YOU.**