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President Hage G. Geingob Expresses Satisfaction with Progress Following Status Briefing on the Negotiations on Genocide, Apology and Reparations Between Namibia and Germany

Today, Tuesday, 11 August 2020, the President of the Republic of Namibia, His Excellency Dr. Hage G. Geingob received a status update from the Special Envoy, Ambassador Dr. Zed Ngavirue on the Negotiations on Genocide, Apology and Reparations (GAR) Between Namibia and Germany. President Geingob called the briefing meeting ahead of the final round of negotiations on a date that is yet to be announced.

Close to five years have passed following the appointment of Special Envoys by the Governments of Namibia and Germany, including the commencement of negotiations. Between 2015 and 2020, eight rounds of negotiations have taken place, alternating between Berlin, Germany and Namibia. Moreover, 15 meetings of the Special Political Cabinet Committee (SPCC) on Genocide, Apology and Reparations Chaired by the Vice President have taken place.

The last round, the 8th meeting between the Special Envoys was held in Swakopmund from 12-13 February 2020. Ambassador Ngavirue informed President Geingob that at the conclusion of the 8th round of negotiations, the Namibian and German negotiating teams agreed on a draft declaration, stressing a narrative of Genocidal events committed by German Imperial Troops in Namibia, and which took place between 1904-1908. In that vein, the German Government citing political and moral responsibility, has agreed to render an unconditional apology to the Namibian Government, her people and in particular the affected communities. Although Genocide is a punishable crime according to the United Nations Convention on Genocide, signed on 9 December 1948 and effective on 12 January 1951, the German and Namibian Government have agreed on a political settlement.

While the Namibian Government agreed to negotiate the issue of redress (reparations), which the German Government consistently referred to as "healing the wounds", Germany has declined to accept the term "reparations". This position, Ambassador Ngavirue explained is

based on Germany's refusal to use the term "reparations" in negotiations with the Jews and the State of Israel, with the two parties settling on the term "Wiedergutmachung" (reconciliation and doing good again) in their agreement signed at Luxemburg in 1952. The Namibian Negotiating Team, Ambassador Ngavirue emphasized, found the terminology "healing the wounds" inadequate, and that demand is currently discussed under the rubric of "Reconciliation and Reconstruction Programme". The terminology, "Reconciliation and Reconstruction Programme" will be submitted for debate and approval to the Special Political Cabinet Committee on Genocide, Apology and Reparations, Chaired by the Vice President, H.E Nangolo Mbumba, and eventually to the Head of State, H.E Hage G. Geingob for final approval.

The current offer for reparations made by the German Government remains an outstanding issue and is not acceptable to the Namibian Government. The Special Cabinet Committee held on 5 March 2020 directed the Special Envoy to continue with negotiations for a revised offer. Also, the Special Committee directed the Technical Committee (TC) to work with the National Planning Commission to identify costed projects for the 7 identified regions in the fields of water provision, rural and peri-urban electrification, road network construction, housing, education, vocational training, value addition, agricultural development and land acquisition. Ambassador Ngavirue reported that the Technical Committee has enlisted the services of an expert who is currently finalizing the project proposals for consideration by the SPCC before the end of August 2020. The projects will be implemented in the 7 identified regions where the affected communities predominantly reside, namely Kharas, Hardap, Khomas, Kunene, Omaheke, Otjozondjupa and Erongo.

Emphasizing the importance of cooperation and compromise in diplomacy, President Geingob thanked and applauded Ambassador Ngavirue for the significant progress made in Phase I of a critical mission for the country. "It appears as if you have finished the task that I had assigned to you", President Geingob said with cautious optimism. President Geingob also thanked the Vice President for the diligent manner in which he continues to carry out the delegated task of Chair of

the Special Political Cabinet Committee on Genocide, Apology and Reparations.

With completion of Phase I on the immediate horizon, President Geingob informed that ahead of Phase II, all concerned groups and affected communities will be invited to The Presidency for a feedback session. Additionally, the Prime Minister as Leader of Government Business in Parliament will deliver a statement in the National Assembly on the Status of Negotiations on Genocide, Apology and Reparations. This is in continuity with the inclusive and transparent method President Geingob unceasingly emphasizes in matters of Governance, including with regard to the Negotiations on Genocide, Apology and Reparations Between Namibia and Germany.

The Vice President, H.E Nangolo Mbumba, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Peter H. Katjavivi and Presidential Press Secretary, Dr. Alfredo Tjiurimo Hengari, attended the status update meeting by Ambassador Dr. Zed Ngavirue to the Head of State, H.E Dr. Hage G. Geingob.

ISSUED BY THE PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

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