

Motion

tabled by the parliamentary groups of the SPD and Alliance 90/The Greens

Strengthening relations between Germany and Namibia and living up to Germany's historical responsibility

The Bundestag is requested to adopt the following motion:

- I. The German Bundestag notes:
 1. The German Bundestag promotes the appointment of a German-Namibian parliamentary friendship group designed to cultivate in-depth contact and discussions between the German Bundestag and the Namibian Parliament. This was also requested once again by Members of the Namibian Parliament during their last visit to the German Bundestag.
 2. The German Bundestag supports the dialogue with Namibian Parliamentarians, the Namibian National Assembly and with the representative organisations of the peoples directly affected by German colonial crimes in order to jointly deal with the past, to achieve reconciliation and to create a brighter common future.
 3. The German Bundestag acknowledges the heavy burden of guilt carried by the German colonial forces as a result of their crimes against the Herero, Nama, Damara and San, and emphasizes, as historians have long since proved, that the war of extermination in Namibia between 1904 - 1908 was a war crime and genocide. The German Bundestag therefore underlines Germany's continuing responsibility for Namibia's future.
 4. The German Bundestag apologises to the descendants of the victims for the injustice and suffering inflicted upon their ancestors in Germany's name.
 5. The German Bundestag supports initiatives to deal with Germany's colonial past.

- II. The German Bundestag calls on the Federal Government,
- to assume the political and moral responsibility for the historical injustice caused to the Herero, Nama and members of other ethnic groups in Germany's name in Namibia;
 - to actively support the Republic of Namibia in its endeavours to join the UN Human Rights Council and to further intensify and promote relations with Namibia also at UN level;
 - to continue, increase and open up the "reconciliation initiative" launched by the Federal Government at the time in 2004 to regional programmes as well. The results achieved to date must be reviewed critically in the joint dialogue with the Namibian Parliament and the Government and the representative organisations of the relatives of the victims. Together, it must first of all be clarified why the initiative was abandoned;
 - The aims of the reconciliation initiative should be:
 - o to contribute to promoting youth and cultural exchange between both countries;
 - o to promote, in particular, land reform and the purchase of land in the areas inhabited by the descendants of the victims in order to improve the living standards there and to set up an aid fund to this end;
 - o to contribute to a post-colonial culture of remembrance and to disseminate knowledge of colonialism in the general public and in schools;
 - o to support activities seeking to replace the street names and monuments commemorating colonial crimes by tributes to important African figures;
 - to ensure lasting development cooperation and economic cooperation with Namibia;
 - to make sure that all the mortal remains in Germany of victims of the bloody suppression of the Herero, Nama and Damara uprising are returned to Namibia in dignified circumstances;
 - to conduct talks with the individual representatives of the ethnic groups in Namibia with respect and the required sensitivity so that the serious mistakes made by the Federal Government during the visit of a Namibian delegation in September 2011 can be rectified in order to bring German-Namibian reconciliation forward;
 - to ensure that the cultural property pillaged during the colonial age in former German South-West Africa and which are currently stored in German archives and stocks are also identified and offered for return;

- to support efforts to deal with Germany's colonial past by assessing whether the establishment of a foundation dedicated to this topic can be initiated at federal level;
- to endeavour to make Germany's colonial past an integral and permanent part of school curricula in Germany.

Berlin, 20 March 2012

**Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier and the parliamentary group of the SPD
Renate Künast, Jürgen Trittin and the parliamentary group of Alliance 90/The
Greens**

Explanatory memorandum

More than a century has passed since the crimes committed by the Imperial German colonial forces. Remembrance of the bloody suppression of the Herero, Nama, Damara and San uprising at the beginning of the 20th century is nonetheless still present to this day in the historical consciousness of the Namibian people. For the people of Namibia it is an integral part of their own history, far more than is the case in Germany to date.

Tens of thousands died in the suppression of the uprising during which the German colonial forces' aim, as historians write, was the "elimination of the enemy". Almost the whole Herero population was murdered during and after the war as a result. The people (not just soldiers, but also women, children and the elderly) who were driven into the Omaheke desert after the battle of out of revenge, a desire to kill and racial hatred, died miserably of starvation and thirst. Anyone who tried to escape the desert and, exhausted and emaciated, surrendered to the Germans, was killed, hanged or locked away in camps. The conditions in these camps were appalling and in thousands of cases meant an agonising death.

In 2004, in light of this shared past and the events to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Namibian uprising, the German Federal Government sent the then Federal Minister of Development Heidemarie Wicczorek-Zeul as its representative to Namibia. In a speech to the descendants of the Herero, Nama and Damara she emphasised: "We Germans accept our historical, political, moral and ethical responsibility and the guilt incurred by Germans at that time. The atrocities committed at that time would today be termed genocide – and nowadays a General von Trotha would be prosecuted and convicted." She also emphasised that she asked the descendants "in the words of the Lord's Prayer that we share, to forgive us our trespasses".

After this visit, the Federal Government decided to double the aid provided as part of German development cooperation within five years. Furthermore, a "reconciliation initiative" was launched, for which an additional € 20 million was made available. The aim of this initiative was above all to promote projects at municipal level, especially in the regions inhabited by the descendants of the ethnic groups who suffered particularly under German colonial rule.

In the last few years, the "reconciliation initiative" has faltered. It is now all the more necessary to put the initiative called for into practice. In the German-Namibian parliamentary dialogue it will therefore be necessary to determine why previous programmes, discussions and dialogues as well as the cultural exchange have not developed as hoped and that the efforts to promote land reforms and the purchase of

land have come to little or nothing at all. The problems and difficulties encountered must be brought to light and discussed as well as taken into account in the planning of new initiatives and projects.

A first indication that the Federal Government now recognises the need to take action was the visit of the Foreign Office's Director-General for African Affairs, Walter Lindner, in February 2012 to Namibia. This, incidentally, had also become necessary due to the Federal Government's failure in September 2011 to demonstrate the slightest esteem, respect or recognition towards a Namibian delegation staying in Germany for the repatriation of the mortal remains of their ancestors, which were returned to them in the Berlin Charité hospital. The behaviour of the Federal Government towards the delegation was criticised at the time both in Germany and in Namibia.

The task of the Bundestag and the Federal Government must therefore be to find suitable ways and means, first, to live up to Germany's historical responsibility towards Namibia and, second, to ensure that both countries work on a common future. In addition to a closely coordinated dialogue between the governments, this also includes developing relations between the members of the parliaments of both countries, after a group of parliamentarians from Namibia said during their last visit to Germany that in Namibia Members of Parliament have already been selected for a parliamentary friendship group.