



**MEDIA INFORMATION SESSION ON THE BRIEFING HELD BY HIS EXCELLENCY
THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA ON 20 MAY 2021 ON THE
OUTCOME OF THE 9TH ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS ON GENOCIDE, APOLOGY &
REPARATIONS BETWEEN NAMIBIA AND GERMANY**

30 May 2021

Distinguished Chiefs and Traditional Councillors present

Representative of various Media Houses

Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning,

We have invited you to provide our position on the briefing held on 20 May 2021 on the outcome of the 9th round of negotiations on **Genocide, Apology and Reparations** between Namibia and Germany.

Today, after more than a hundred years of the Extermination Order issued by German General Lothar von Trotha, the Herero and Nama people still live in abject poverty, psycho-social trauma, scattered all over the world and landless with minimal political and economic power diminished by the Genocide committed by the German Imperial Government between 1904 and 1908.

The German Imperial Government issued and an Extermination Order, through General Lothar von Trotha, against the Ovaherero people on 2 October 1904, which read as follows:

“I, the great General of the German soldiers, send this letter to the Herero nation. The Herero are no longer German subjects. They have murdered and stolen and cut off the noses, ears and other members of the bodies of wounded soldiers. Now they are too cockirmishedly to continue fighting I say to the nation: Every person who delivers one of the captains as a captive to a military post, will receive 1000 Marks. The one who hands over Samuel will receive 5000 Marks. All Hereros must leave the country (German South West Africa). If they do not so, I will force them with cannons to do so. Within the German borders, every Herero, with or without weapons, with or without cattle will be shot. I no longer shelter women and children. They must either return to their people or they will be shot first. This is my message to the Herero nation.” (Pool, 1991, p. 272)

As if that was not enough, subsequently the German Imperial Government issued another Extermination Order against the Nama people on 24 April 1905, which read as follows:

“The Nama who chooses not to surrender and let’s himself be seen in the German area will be shot, until all are exterminated. Those who, at the start of the rebellion, committed murder against whites or have commanded that whites be murdered have, by law, forfeited their lives. As for the few not defeated, it will fare with them as it fared with the Herero, who in their blindness also believed that they could make successful skirmish against the powerful German Emperor and the great German people. I ask you, where are the Herero today.” (Sarkin, 2010, p. 118)

1. OVERVIEW

- 1.1. In an effort to address the Genocide committed by the Germans, a motion was introduced in the National Assembly and a Resolution was passed on 26 October 2006 to direct the Namibian Government to address the following issues with the German Government:

- One: To commence a process of negotiations on the issues of recognition of Genocide, issuance of an Apology and payment of Reparation from the German Government.
 - Two: The Resolution further directed that the process must have active participation and direct involvement of the descendants of the Genocide victims (Nama and Herero people) through a tripartite framework.
- 1.2. We would like to thank the Namibian Government for having called a meeting on the 20th of May 2021 to brief the Chiefs' Forum on the outcome of the 9th round of negotiations on the Genocide, Apology and Reparations in line with the Resolution passed by the Namibian National Assembly in October 2006.
 - 1.3. Considering the seriousness of the immortal Genocide discourse, we would first like to acknowledge and appreciate the seriousness and commitment that our Government has shown since the commencement of this process and up to its conclusion after 9 rounds of robust negotiations with alternating venues both in Germany and Namibia. We totally are humbled and feel content in our Government for having established a good governance architecture for this process, commencing with the appointment of the political committee headed by the Right Honourable Prime Minister, the appointment of a respected retired Diplomat of our nation and a descendant of the victims being His Excellency Ambassador Dr. Zed Ngavirue, a Government Technical Committee (that serves as a support structure), as well as the Traditional Authorities Technical Committee (that represent the victims of the Genocide). In addition to this structure, we also acknowledge the financial and material contributions by our Government through the able and capable leadership of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Namibia Dr Hage Geingob and under the stewardship of His Excellency Dr. Nangolo Mbumba, Vice President of the Republic of Namibia.
 - 1.4. The negotiation process has been met with a lot of challenges from various sectors and interest groups but due to the determination and commitment of our Government as well as the trust bestowed by our communities upon their Government and its leadership, this process continued until the 9th round.
 - 1.5. During this negotiation process, we have remained resolute and steadfast with our Government-driven process as mandated by a Resolution of the National Assembly and we have participated fully in the commitment of our Government in finding an amicable solution to the plight of our people.

- 1.6. Therefore, we do hereby register our appreciation towards the good governance process through the promotion of transparency. However, we, in the same vain, would like to highlight a number of observations from this briefing.
- 1.7. We would like to state that during the meeting of the 20th of May 2021 we - as representatives of the affected communities - only came to learn of the negotiated value in terms of monetary as well its scope considering the issues at hand and the dynamics thereof. In light of this shortfall, we have been challenged in terms of briefing our communities from an informed point and this in a way we have left our communities in the dark, let alone being lost in terms of progress tracking.
- 1.8. We have concluded that procedurally the Government of the Republic of Namibia did not properly inform us timeously about the proposal/offer made by the German Government for us to engage and consult our constituents to get their blessing and a mandate to pursue that amount.
- 1.9. Since the Government of the Republic of Namibia did not properly inform us timeously about the offer proposed by the German Government for us to engage and consult our constituents, we pleaded and recommended that the Chiefs MUST be given enough time for consultations and decision making concerning the given offer. As agreed upon, we have consulted our constituents and deliberated over this very crucial matter which has been at the heart of our existence for more than a hundred years.
- 1.10. Following our successful consultations with our communities i.e. the descendants of the German Genocide victims, who are our subjects, we would like to communicate our position on their behalf as follows:
 - i. We are pleased that the German Government acknowledges that the genocidal acts committed by German imperial troops in Namibia between 1904-1908, constitute and amounts to Genocide, as prescribed in the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crimes of Genocide of 1948. In this regard, we welcome and accept the German Government's admission of heinous and atrocious deeds committed during the period 1904-1908 against the Ovaherero and Nama people as Genocide
 - ii. Furthermore, we took note that the German Government agrees to render an unconditional apology to the Government and people of Namibia, particularly the descendants of the victims (Ovaherero and Nama communities) of the Herero-Nama Genocide of 1904-1908. In this regard, we welcome and accept the German Government's readiness to deliver an apology to the Ovaherero and Nama descendants.

- iii. We also took cognisance that Germany accepts a moral, historical and political obligation to provide the necessary means (reparations) in the form of monetary compensation of 1,1 billion Euros for reconciliation and reconstruction programmes for the particular affected communities.
- iv. However, on the Reparations it is a shocking revelation that this key issue remains unresolved. We have taken note of the so-called reconciliation and reconstruction grant that is being proposed as a substitute for Reparations. We were briefed that an amount of 1.1 billion Euros was offered by the German Government and our position is that the amount proposed/offered is an affront to our existence and is not in line with the proposed reparation quantum that we submitted in 2019 for consideration during negotiations through the ONCD 1904-1908.
- v. We would like to inform you that the amount proposed/offered by the German Government is unacceptable to our communities given the magnitude of the genocidal atrocities committed. Hence, we vehemently and unequivocally reject and condemn the proposed insulting amount of a mere 1.1 billion Euros as Reparations for the lives and blood, displacement, losses and suffering of the Ovaherero and Nama people at the hands of the brutal German Imperial Government. This amount will never be able to properly atone for the crimes against humanity committed against our people.
- vi. Noting that the Reparations issue is not resolved - and having accepted the German acceptance of Genocide - Germany has a legal obligation to close this chapter through a proper and just Reparations obligation.
- vii. We are ready to commence the Reparations process with immediate effect.
- viii. The Diaspora issue remains neglected and unresolved and we are calling on all parties to consider this issue with the seriousness, sensitivity and urgency it deserves.
- ix. We are calling on all affected communities, the Namibian nation at large and the international community to remain resolute, steadfast and united to support us in this course and bring it to a logical conclusion.

1.11. In the course of the history, the German Government paid the Jewish people as from 1952 to today - over seven decades - reparations to the victims of the Holocaust while the German Government want to conclude the 1904 -1908 genocide in three decades. The reparation amount paid to the Jewish people is quite substantial in our view.

1.12. As a recent example, the German Government has allocated millions in COVID-19 relief aid to be divided amongst the poorest Holocaust victims located in Israel, North America, the former Soviet Union and Western Europe. Also, it increased funding for social welfare services to the Holocaust victims and regions such as Bulgaria and Romania, which they declare as open ghettos.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

We make the following recommendations:

- 2.1. It has not been made known to us as to how the German Government has arrived at their figure of 1.1 billion Euros. Our recommendation is that our “Position Paper on the Reparation Quantum” document should form the foundation for the reparation negotiation.
- 2.2. Under the grant package, the funds to the various programs under the reconstruction components do not include any allocation to Poverty Alleviation Intervention initiatives, Rural Developments, Agriculture Programmes (including livestock and crop production), Health-, Housing- and Education Sectors and Business Development aspects. We want to ensure that these sectors and aspects enjoy priority in a comprehensive manner.
- 2.3. The Report provided does not indicate whether this negotiation is an end in itself or it has opened a dialogue for future generations. Our recommendation is that the proposed final agreement should reflect in writing for continuous engagements for future generations.
- 2.4. The Bi-National Commission stated in the Report does not mention the participation of the descendants of the victims and it appears to be the normal bilateral relations between the two Governments. Our recommendation is that the Bi-National Commission, MUST include the participation of the descendants of the victims of the Genocide and it should not only be linked to the normal bilateral relations between the two Governments.
- 2.5. The Report provided does not indicate if any and when impact assessment, monitoring and evaluation will be conducted to allow for a widow of improvement or recommitment. Our recommendation is that the agreement MUST clearly indicate how and when assessment, monitoring and evaluation of the impact in advancement of the proposed development will be conducted to allow for a widow of improvement or recommitment.
- 2.6. The Diaspora issue has been and remain to be a bone of contention and it was reported at various platforms that it was not receiving the attention it deserves and it is equally

evident that in the Report this issue is overshadowed if not omitted. We have descendant of the victims of genocide in Botswana, South Africa, Cameroon and Togo. The Diaspora issue MUST be included as an eighth area of concern and a framework must be work out. The agreement should not be concluded without the inclusion of the Diasporians.

- 2.7. The content of the draft final Declaration was not made known to us during the briefing session and this left us with little room to make decisive decisions. We demand that the final draft Declaration must be shared with the descendants of the victims of the genocide. The ideal condition of the Declaration should be made available to the leaders of the various communities for their consideration and consent prior to finalisation. This will allow us to make concrete recommendations for some of the shortcomings identified above.
- 2.8. We were informed that the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany will provide funds in the form of a grant for the programmes. Our recommendation is that the Federal Republic of Germany should commit funds rather than grants for the programmes.

3. CONCLUSIONS

We demand that the above stated recommendations be included in the final document and be considered.

We believe that we can only do justice to the **apology, reconciliation and reconstruction process** if our proposition for reparations is considered within the parameters of the amount proposed.

Lastly, we request that the envisaged signing ceremony between the German and Namibian Governments be postponed to allow for a conclusive discussion of the delegate issue of Reparations for purposes of restorative justice.

We express our appreciation to the following eminent persons:

- Ambassador Arikana Chihombori for a media briefing on Facebook in which she appreciated the negotiation process and indicated specifically that the reparation offered was not enough.

- Former President of Botswana Seretse Khama Ian Khama for taking time and appreciating our negotiations and for expressing the hope that that the compensation will also be given which will include support for the descendants of the victims of those atrocities and that those in Botswana will also benefit from such support.

The struggle continues and we remain resolute.

We express appreciation for availing yourselves to attend this briefing session and we remain available to engage with you.

Thank you and have a blessed Sunday!

.....
Supreme Chief Tjinaani Maharero
Maharero Royal Traditional Authority

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Supreme Chief Manasse M. C. Zeraeua
Zeraeua Royal Traditional Authority

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Councillor Benestus Kandundu
Kambazembi Royal Traditional Authority

.....
Councillor Mireti
Mireti Royal Traditional Authority

.....
Comrade Jonathan Katjimune
Gam Community Leadership