

POSITION OF THE CHIEFS
ON
THE RECONCILIATION AND RECONSTRUCTION AGREEMENT
BETWEEN
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
AND
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC GERMANY
ON
GENOCIDE, APOLOGY AND REPARATIONS

Consequent to the Vice President of the Republic of Namibia, His Excellency, Nangolo Mbumba, kindly acceding to our humble request to brief us on the latest developments regarding Genocide, Apology and Reparations. As traditional leaders of the affected communities of the Ovaherero and Ovambanderu, we converged in Windhoek on Wednesday, 9 June, 2021, to in unison give this matter our utmost consideration as it deserves and to formulate our common position to give to His Excellency a well-considered opinion on this vexed matter. Especially to the Reconciliation and Reconstruction Agreement.

We have arrived at this position duly after almost two weeks during which we painstakingly had our ears to the ground, listening, and our minds tuned to digesting information from various sources. A period we also have had the benefit and privilege of a briefing by Namibian experts on the technical committee of the government negotiating team between the two respective governments.

All these information and fact-finding endeavours culminated in the national address by His Excellency on Friday, June 4, 2021. In this regard our opinion on this sensitive and vexed matter of special interest to our communities, as indeed it is to our government, is well informed and well considered.






Thus:

- Appreciative of the efforts by our Government and its German counterpart, which gained the required momentum in 2015 when His Excellency, Dr. Hage Geingob, assumed the reins of governance of our Republic;
- Cognisant of the resources both human, material and financial that our government have


expended on the negotiations;


- Recognising the essence of the cordial bilateral relations between the two friendly nations, and well aware of its genesis; Germany's colonial engagement and the resultant genocide of the Ovaherero, Ovambaderu and Nama during 1904-1908, but forerunner and punctuated by various and different historical epochs since the occupation of the then territory of South West Africa by Imperial Germany in the late 19th century;
- Recalling the 2006 Motion of the National Assembly of the Republic of Namibia for an amicable solution to the outstanding questions of the past;
- Desirous of seeing the continued strengthening of the cordial relations between the two countries, governments and the peoples;
- Intent on working resolutely with the two governments on the socio-economic upliftment and empowerment of our affected communities, wherever they find themselves in Namibia and in the Diaspora, including their cultural reawakening; through spearheading and encouraging cultural exchanges between our people in Botswana, Namibia and South Africa;
- Imploring our governments in the three countries to rally squarely behind the efforts of the victim communities in this regard and helping financially in this endeavour;


Thereby, we herewith note with respect to the Reconciliation and Reconstruction Agreement between our government of the Republic of Namibia and her counterpart of the Federal Republic of Germany, we offer the following assessment on the Declaration:


-  It is our considered and informed opinion that the Joint Declaration by the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Namibia, only speaks to the two governments, and in the case of Namibia does not speak to the affected communities on whose behalf our government is supposed to have been speaking, or all along has led us to believe it has been speaking;
-  Not only this but it is also our strong belief that this Declaration was crafted by the Federal Republic of Germany with little or no input by the Republic of Namibia;
-  Resultantly the Declaration is blatantly more a reflection of the interests of Federal Republic of Germany than the interests of the Republic of Namibia, and even less so the interests of the affected communities, notably the Ovaherero, Ovambaderu and Nama;
-  This is clearly borne out by reference in the Declaration to the Resolutions of the Bundestag of 1989 and 2004 while well confirming the special historical and moral responsibility towards Namibia, there is little evidence even in the Declaration itself of any direct commitment from Germany to the affected communities as it would have been the case between a victim and a perpetrator who is showing contrition;
-  While we are made to believe that the government of the Federal Republic of Germany has accepted its "historical and moral responsibility" towards Namibia, it actually stops short of


recognising the genocide committed against our forebears with reference to Genocide only refers to it in passing in the document but not as a matter of fact. This from a Government of a country whose parliament, the Bundestag, during 2016overwhelmingly voted that the mass killing of Armenians during 1915 by the Ottoman Turks was Genocide;


 Hence, it is our opinion, that the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, was not mandated to negotiate on Genocide, in the absence of a resolution from the Bundestag, whereas the Namibian Government and representatives of the affected communities sole mandate was to negotiate on Genocide and Reparations;


 A meagre amount of 1.1 billion Euros is being offered, not as reparations but as a grant in aid and assistance of development projects in the political regions/areas of the affected communities. Thus putting the emphasises on regions and not the victim communities affirms that the mandate of the Federal Government of Germany emanates from the two aforementioned Bundestag resolutions;

 Besides the meagre amount, especially if one considers the fact that it is spread over 30 years, its overall value and impact on the said affected communities is highly questionable; with the nature of the projects also suspect in terms of the immediate and direct impact on the communities.

 It is also our considered and informed opinion any reparations should spread over generations, i.e two to three generations or 60 to 90 years, which is not the case with the grant by Germany. The Declaration is purportedly seeking to address ills committed close to 120 years ago with ramifications still being felt today;

 We also note that emphasis is put on vocational training but not on different disciplines of educational endeavours. Meaning if this is the roadmap, future generations of the affected communities would be condemned to just being vocational training artisans. What about scientists, historians, etc?

 We also cannot but note that this assistance does not do better or undo the notion or perception of our fellow descendants in the Diaspora being just stepchildren of us their fellows in Namibia because it does not provide for them. This goes against the idea of reparations which ideally should be all inclusive;

 Lastly but not the least one cannot ignore the groundswell opinion from especially the affected communities, including traditional leaders, that the agreement leaves much to be desired, both in substance and in the amount proposed;

Therefore, conscious and mindful of the above-mentioned and true to our own conscience as descendants of the victims of genocide;

We herewith wish to appeal to the good office of Your Excellency, that this Agreement need serious rethinking, if not recalibration, first among the affected communities themselves, which we have no doubt that your good offices is well placed and equipped to facilitate.

So that if needs be the process does not only gain more credibility and legitimacy, but is a greatly enhanced in terms of its substance.

We gather that the process is bound for the National Assembly now. We strongly advise that taking the process to the National Assembly, as much as this is the route which it came, should not be in the sense of pushing it through but to refresh and/or recast if not completely redrawing it altogether.

Informed by the groundswell sentiments of not only the affected communities we represent, who have expressed serious reservations to total rejection of the agreement, and also in view of the international analysts and experts who have widely dismissed the agreement as nothing but whitewash, plus the fact that the entire negotiations have been shrouded in secrecy that the public carry little insight about it, we wish at this point to humbly appeal to His Excellency, and at the same time advise him to summon his wisdom and judiciousness in this regard so that this process be paused for a proper inclusive review process with the ultimate intent of bringing sanity to what has been seeming largely and insane and illegitimate process.

Signed on this day: **10 of June, 2021** at **Windhoek** in the **Khomas Region** in the **Republic of Namibia**.

By:

1) **Chief Turimuro Hoveka:** Hoveka Traditional Authority _ _ _ _ _

2) **Chief Sam Kambazembi:** Kambazembi Traditional Authority _ _ _ _ _

3) **Paramount Chief Aletha Nguvauva:** Ovambanderu Traditional Council_ _ _ _ _

4) **Chief Rafael Kapia:** Zeraeua Traditional Authority _ _ _ _ _

