

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY
DR SAM NUJOMA, PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA, ON THE
OCCASION OF THE WORLD SUMMIT ON
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (WSSD)**

30 AUGUST 2002

**JOHANNESBURG
SOUTH AFRICA**

**Mr. President
Your Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

When we met in Rio de Janeiro 10 years ago, we did so to build upon the achievements of the Declaration adopted in 1972 at Stockholm. Today, we meet in the golden city of Johannesburg seeking to build on the momentum of Agenda 21, in order to effectively arrest environmental degradation and enhance social and economic development. Our presence here must symbolise our collective political will to safeguard our earth, our common home, for the benefit of all.

On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Namibia and indeed on my own behalf, I am pleased, Mr President, to see you at the helm of this important world gathering. I would also like to express our sincere appreciation and thanks to you, the Government and people of South Africa for hosting this Summit under such excellent arrangements.

To the UN Secretary General, Mr Kofi Annan, I thank him for his vision and tireless efforts in making sustainable development a priority of our organisation.

The President of Venezuela, as Chairman of the Group of 77 and China, pronounced the concerns of the countries of the South. He eloquently stated the expectations of developing countries from this summit. Namibia shares those concerns and associates herself with those aspirations.

Mr President,

The people of the world are looking at this Summit and are assessing our achievements on the implementation of Agenda 21.

Agenda 21 is a vision for a world where human beings are at the centre of development activities where they direct these processes in a responsible manner. It reaffirms the link between environment and development and includes everybody and all countries in efforts to ensure and promote sustainable development.

Therefore, the real judges of the process are those who go to bed hungry every day, those who have no roof over their heads and those millions who struggle every day to feed their children. It is those countries which have to choose between servicing their external debt and providing sustainable livelihoods for their people. It is also the many developing countries that do not

determine the prices of their commodities and must depend on the merciless market forces. Only when Agenda 21 has touched the lives of these people in a positive and humane manner, shall we have kept the commitments we set for ourselves in Rio 10 years ago.

Mr President

Namibia being a semi-arid country, attaches great importance to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). As a result, during the development of the Second National Development Plan, we stressed, inter-alia an innovative Drought Policy underpinning the establishment of a Drought Fund to provide social safety net to farmers and rural peasants. The Government of Namibia has also paid special attention to the eradication of poverty and inequality in the country by way of adopting the Community - Based Natural Resource Management Policy which created community-based eco-tourism enterprises. For the countries affected by drought and desertification, food security is a core component of sustainable development. Hence the importance of the implementation of this Convention to our country.

The implementation of Agenda 21 within the context of the Second National Development Plan has also given Namibia the long term vision 2030 to develop our country into an ideal nation that we seek to bequeath to our children. To achieve this objective, we endeavour to tackle the lack of human and institutional capacities through building a reliable information base and to obtain environmentally friendly technologies that are appropriate for sustainable development.

Mr president,

A serious concern to my country and indeed to the developing world as a whole, pertains to costs and constraints on the developing countries with respect to the implementation of Agenda 21. It is important to note that the capacities of developing countries, especially African countries to effectively implement Agenda 21 are being compromised by the burden of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, poverty and civil strife. In addition, the servicing of external debt continue to restrict many countries to invest in education, health and other social programmes. Therefore, the implementation of Agenda 21 should be enhanced through increased financial and technical assistance from the developed countries.

In this connection, let me stress that the commitment to the principle of common but differentiated responsibility is not an abdication of duty by the developing countries. Rather, and rightly so, it is a recognition of the varying capacities among states to address the challenges of sustainable development. It is also an acknowledgement of the unequal benefits nations derive from the global environment and the need to rectify this. Therefore, if Agenda 21 is to succeed, the principle of common but differentiated responsibility cannot be reneged upon. Equally, the capacity of developing countries to confront their development challenges should be addressed.

It is incompatible with sustainable development to expect compliance from the developing countries with unfair environmental standards. We must reduce and close the widening gap between the rich and poor countries through fair trade and investment. Multilateral trade rules can only enhance sustainable development when they are influenced by all countries.

Our citizens are watching this Summit proceedings, with high hopes that an enabling environment would be created, which will expand development benefits and economic opportunities.

This will enable them to eradicate poverty; enhance food security, protect the environment, fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic and raise their children in a more dignified world. The implementation of the Millennium Declaration is also critical in this regard.

We reiterate our commitments for the further implementation of Agenda 21 with clear targets and time frames coupled with sufficient resources to make meaningful interventions in the quest for sustainable development.

Mr. President

We live in an interdependent world and countries should take farsighted and common actions on the implementation of sustainable development. Only when we change our behaviours towards promoting sustainable patterns of production and consumption can we improve the state of the world and eradicate poverty and hunger which haunt millions of poor people in all parts of the world everyday.

The future generations deserve our immediate action. And their future is in our hands.

I thank you.