

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



Remarks by Ms. Daisy Mathias,

Presidential Advisor: Youth Matters & Enterprise Development

At UNFPA – International Conference on Population & Development 25

11 September 2019, Windhoek Country Club & Casino, Windhoek

- If Sub-Saharan Africa was a person – 19 year old, black, female, in rural or peri-urban area, saddled with the triple challenge of Poverty, Unemployment & (income & wealth) Inequalities.
- World Economic Forum (WEF) estimates 20mill people will join workforce every year, for next 2 decades. Sub Saharan Africa is youngest, fastest growing region; increasingly urbanized, literate, integrated and upwardly mobile. Projected economic growth of 3.3% in 2019. At same time, Africa is projected to expand size of total workforce, as young people come of age and enter world of work. Our reality demands higher economic growth levels to absorb incoming cohort and provide opportunities for youth.
- Namibia deep into Demographic window of opportunity, which opened in 1990s and will close within next 4 decades, by 2060. We have until peak 2032 to intensify reforms and investments into Universal Access to SRHR. Beyond 2060, pyramid will inverse; majority would have transitioned into aging population segment, shifting burden to Government through social safety nets, if retirement savings not achieved.
- We live in a time of Great Promise; Unpredictability & Uncertainty. This Generation faces existential threat of Climate Change and while 4IR is for most part an enabler, amplifier and accelerator of preceding revolutions– the confluence of technologies under the 4IR has dramatically changed the world in which we live in. Digital Divide has potential to accelerate inequalities. Inclusion can close the gaps.

REFLECTION AND 3 POINT PLAN:

1. 4IR – there will be winners and losers from unprecedented disruptions. While New Technologies will enable Africa to catch up with world, automation will cut jobs - but not Work. Skills become new currency. Countries like Namibia have High exposure to technology but education systems & industry have low capacity to react. IMPACT? Un-employability.
 - a. Education: we have to help people reskill & up-skill; Adaptive learning and AI teaching. Institutions of higher learning can adapt by redesigning curricula for new skills.
 - b. ICT: leverage as a tool to enhance Literacy & Numeracy and as a facilitator for trade, commerce and development. [AfCFTA]
 - c. We are not owners of technology – But we have Open Data – a Capital Resource to inform SMART & Intelligence driven development.

- d. This is our opportunity to drive inclusion & economic growth, through education reskilling. ICT remains tool to leapfrog.
2. Enterprise Development with focus to inculcate culture entrepreneurship & strengthening innovation value chains. Convergence of tech & innovation can create viable industries for job creation, in sectors like FinTech, Agriculture and sophisticated Information Management Systems (biometrics) towards efficient & effective governance.
 - i. Innovation: R&D underinvested in. Transfers Innovation can be secured through targeted investments; and facilitative tools like Equity Equivalents
 3. Accurate projections for development planning: Namibia's population set to rise significantly to 3.4 million people by 2041 – this will have direct impact on infrastructural and capacity demands. Accurate planning will enable us to be prepared to respond to opportunity. Sustain studies to understand population dynamics/drivers that impact fertility and mortality.
 - a. National Skills Development Plans essential to equip young people with requisite skills to compete in the 21st Century. Failure to do so will only exacerbate inequalities in the long term.
 - b. Rural Development Strategies: Marginalised young people face unique challenges, as they struggle to break out of cycles of poverty and these frustrations could also fuel instability.

CLOSING:

- Namibia's President Geingob's words of caution should reverberate, that: "prosperity that is not shared prosperity, will not be sustainable." Genuine transformation & inclusion is therefore both political & moral imperative.
 - "This is Africa's Century and we want to utilize it to good effect" was South Africa's President Ramaphosa's concluding assessment at the just ended WEF on Africa.
-