**Intersessional Seminar on Youth and Human Rights**

12 April 2021 | 10AM – 12PM & 3PM – 5PM (CEST)

**STATEMENT**

*(as of 30 March 2021)*

**PER: MELISSA ARAES**

**INSTITUTION: NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL OF NAMIBIA**

**Challenges and Discrimination faced by Young people in the realization of their Rights**

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**Introduction**

Young people make up a large segment of the population in most countries. Investing in the young generation is one of the key pillars for advancing a development process geared towards achieving the realization of their rights. Although the concept of youth is socially constructed depending on the historical context and does not necessarily refer to age, in this context it refers to the population aged between 18-35. Young people face many challenges and discrimination in the realization of their rights and only a selected few will be discussed.

**Unemployment**

In 2020, the estimated youth unemployment rate in Namibia was at 41.17 percent as opposed to 39.53% in 2019. This shows that the unemployment rate has drastically increased because of the financial and economic crisis. Transition periods from education to the labour market has become longer and the lack of entry-level jobs has resulted in the widespread practice of accepting unpaid internships which further contributes to the difficulties young people experience towards autonomy. Entering the labour market is therefore a nemesis and even more so for persons with disabilities by the mere fact that there are not enough accessible workplaces. This entails that they cannot gain the necessary experience required to get competitive jobs.

Within the Namibian context, the government has prioritized unemployment as a socio-economic concern and has since employed various avenues to address the issue such as the Targeted Intervention Program for Employment and Economic Growth (TIPEEG). Despite these efforts, the high levels of unemployment still remain unabated. In addition, the Namibian Constitution also provides for Affirmative Action in Article 23 which is a progressive piece of legislation towards curbing the unemployment of previously disadvantaged persons.

**Access to Health Care**

Pertaining the notion of access to health care, public spending on health is not perceived as a form of investment, therefore young people encounter obstacles in accessing health services, either because they do not exist or because they are expensive, inaccessible, unaffordable, and/or insufficiently marketed. Despite numerous available health and social welfare stations, access to health care is a concern for a large number of Namibians due to their geographical locations and remoteness. Overall, there are three health workers per 1000 people, slightly above the WHO recommendation. To illustrate the interconnected nature of the foregoing social challenges faced by the Youth in Namibia, it is self-evident that as a result of youth unemployment, the youth cannot afford medical aid or basic health care services.

**Right to Housing**

The excessive commercialization of housing as a fundamental human right in Namibia means that the average Namibian aged 18-35 cannot own a proper housing facility. This is precedented in the fact that housing in Namibia recorded the second highest house price growth in the world, second only to Dubai in 2014.

**Child Marriage**

According to the Child Marriage Report launched on the 29th of October 2020 by the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare (MGEPESW), the United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the Global Fund, the prevalence of child marriage among girls in Namibia is 18.4%, while for boys it is considerably lower at 4.1%. The key drivers of child marriage in Namibia include poverty, cultural norms, teenage pregnancy and the lack of educational opportunities. The estimated age for marriage or cohabitation is 11 years and the consequence is that it leads to an increase in gender-based violence (GBV), poor educational attainment, poor sexual and reproductive health outcomes, physical, emotional and sexual abuse, deprivation of childhood experiences and the abandonment by husbands.

**Conclusion and Recommendations at International level**

The first step in the realisation of the right to work and social protection for the youth is ensuring well-resourced protection systems and strategies that will facilitate a smooth transition from education to employment. The development and implementation of income support schemes targeting young people can help guarantee a decent standard of living for youth. Additionally, national governments should promulgate laws on the right to quality jobs through the regulation of non-standard and precarious forms of work, including through the prohibition of unpaid internships. National governments should also invest in the development and provision of accessible health services targeting young people, including mental and sexual health services, with funds earmarked specifically for youth.