



Statement by H.E. Sabine Böhlke-Möller, Ambassador/Permanent Representative, 33rd Session of the Human Rights Council, Half-Day Panel Discussion on Violence against Indigenous Women and girls, 20 September 2016

Mr. President,

Namibia applauds the Council for honoring the invitation of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples to examine the causes and consequences of violence against indigenous women and girls in consultation with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples.

Namibia acknowledges that our efforts to curb violence against all women and girls must be based on a holistic approach to the issue of violence against indigenous women and girls, and recognizes that such violence is deeply influenced by ethnicity, gender, and historical factors, and that addressing such violence requires an intersectional approach to human rights. Violence against indigenous women and girls is intrinsically linked to indigenous peoples' histories of discrimination and marginalization. As States we must also ensure that women and children who have experienced violence have access to rehabilitation programmes, assistance with childcare and maintenance, treatment, counseling, health services, social services and other support structures.

We are proud that the Namibian Constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of ethnic or tribal affiliation. We are aware of the vulnerability of indigenous women, who are referred to in Namibia as “marginalized”. These marginalized women are exposed to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, and are extremely vulnerable to violence. It is true that violence against women, especially indigenous women and girls is often rooted in marginalization and poverty. The Government through the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare and its Community Development and Women Empowerment Programme works with marginalized communities to improve access to services as well as

the living conditions of women, particularly in rural areas.

Mr. President,

Violence against indigenous women includes domestic violence, which is harmful to society at large. It creates a general atmosphere of disrespect for women and maintains a high level of violence in society, by teaching children that force is acceptable. The consequences we suffer include increased overall levels of crime and violence, social problems such as alcohol and drug abuse and lost productivity. In this way it imperils the overall development of nations.

Discrimination based on inherited status, which refers to a form of discrimination based on descent, is destructive in nature and should be discouraged or even prohibited.

I thank you.