



Permanent Mission of the Republic of Namibia to the
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STATEMENT BY MR. ROYAL /UI/O/OO, DEPUTY
MINISTER FOR MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES,
REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
AT THE 18TH SESSION OF THE UN PERMANENT
FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES ON ITEM 5:
INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF INDIGENOUS
LANGUAGES

22 April 2019

**check against delivery*

Greeting in San language

Chairperson,

I commend the United Nations for designating 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages. For Namibia, this is very important as most Namibians identify strongly with an indigenous or traditional language. There are twelve indigenous languages in Namibia, with each language having many dialects. Although English remains our main official language, depending on the part of the country where you are, the language spoken there is also an function language and our Constitution makes provision for other languages to be used in an official capacity. Meaning you can be assisted in any office in the language you speak. The ability to communicate clearly is a key function for all people, and ability to use indigenous language plays a critical role for indigenous communities; particularly settings outside the home. s

It is important to make a distinction for a country like Namibia, where all of us are indigenous, and therefore speak indigenous

languages. Many of those communities are catered for by government in the provision of indigenous languages, in schools, official settings, and within their communities. However, there are specifically three groups who are left on the margins and who are classified as “marginalized communities” in Namibia content specifically the Ovaherero, the Ovambo and the San people. These groups are the ones I will be focusing on, and the opportunities and challenges they face in regards to keeping and maintaining their indigenous languages.

Chairperson,

For the San, Ovaherero and Ovambo, indigenous language is still mostly passed on within the home or within the communities, but rarely in educational settings or official settings. The challenge remains in providing education in the indigenous language at the foundational stages, and for that reason, you find many children not able to speak their language. Or in cases where education is provided in the mother tongue, it only goes up to a certain grade level in primary schools, leaving a large gap at secondary and tertiary levels.

The Government of Namibia believes indigenous languages are the cornerstone of our identity, defining who we've always been and who we are. We place great emphasis on people preserving and developing their languages. However we continue to face challenges in funding indigenous languages curriculum, which would lead to greater preservation of indigenous languages. We have to make every effort, to preserve Indigenous languages for Indigenous Peoples' strong futures for generations to come.

THANK YOU!!!