

Press Release of the Embassy of Namibia to Germany:

2nd Reading of the Bundestag of the 17th March 2016 regarding the Namibian 1904-1908 Genocide Motion.

One of the 1st official functions H.E. Andreas Guibeb, Ambassador of Namibia attended in Germany since assuming duties was the dignified ceremony attended by all political parties represented in the Bundestag on the 27th January every year in the presence of the Chancellor, the President of Germany and the President of Parliament and Bundesrat to honor the victims of the holocaust.

This raised the obvious question: Why were all the motions tabled thus far in the Bundestag by the SPD, the Left Party and the Green Party not successful in achieving a similar unanimous, respectful recognition of the Namibian genocide victims if all the parties in the Bundestag now recognize that what happened in Namibia qualifies to be termed genocide.

General practice in the German Bundestag is that the majority party or ruling coalition usually does not vote in favour of a motion tabled by opposition parties, even if there is agreement with the content of a proposed resolution. Against this background it is clear that the same fate would befall the 2 motions of the Left and the Green Party which will come up for debate on the 17th March 2016.

Therefore, the only way that a motion regarding the Namibian genocide will ever be successful in the Bundestag is to either have a motion tabled by the ruling coalition parties or an all-party motion, which would be the preferred solution in order to ensure that the issue is dealt with in a dignified and respectful manner that honours the memory of the Namibian genocide victims.

An all-party motion in the Harambee spirit does not overlook that the parties have different views, it only means that they agree to discuss those differences in order to arrive at a unanimous decision. In his discussions with several members of all parties represented in the German parliament, Ambassador Guibeb mentioned that this would send a hopeful signal to the people of Namibia and Africa.

The impression rightly or wrongly gained during these discussions was that although the Bundestag rarely had examples of all-party motions, this particular matter deserved such an approach in order to avoid what occurred in 2004. Then a German Minister had the commendable courage to proffer an apology in Namibia, only to be told upon her return to Germany that it was her personal opinion and not that of the German Government.

It is based on that background that Ambassador Guibeb reiterated the appeal for an all-party motion made under similar circumstances to all the parties in the Bundestag already in 2007 by Prof. Dr. Katjavivi, the then Namibian Ambassador to Germany, appealing to them to treat the Namibian genocide as the exception, which it deserves to be. This way nobody would thereafter contest the validity of the acknowledgement of genocide and the official apology.

Ambassador Guibeb appreciates the contribution made by those parties and NGOs, who over the years consistently backed the quest for the recognition of the Namibian genocide. As stated to them, Namibia appreciates their historic support on the issue and hopes they equally understand our wish that the German parliament would now join hands and table an all-party motion so as to deal with the genocide against the Herero, Nama, Damara and San in the dignified and respectful manner which it deserves.

That naturally is a matter for negotiation between the parliamentary groups in the German Bundestag.

Dated 16-03-2016

Signed by the Ambassador