

Open Letter to: The Special Envoys: Mr. Polenz and Dr Ngavirue,  
Konrad-Adenauer Foundation and the Namibia Institute for  
Democracy.

By

Festus U. Muundjua

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I am writing in my personal capacity, but as a victim of the Herero Genocide, and since the issue that I am about to raise is, in my opinion, very important and relates to the ongoing “negotiations” – sometimes referred to as the “framework for the negotiations” – between the governments of Germany and Namibia, I would like to implore your paper to publish this open letter *verbatim* for all and sundry to see.

In The Namibian Sun of Thursday November 3, 2016, I have raised or rather revealed that the German government and the Namibian government, shortly after our Independence, have signed an agreement to say that the development aid given to Namibia and the “support” for SWAPO during the liberation struggle against South Africa “made reparation payments void.”

This letter, therefore, continues to raise the same concern and hereby to invite all those instances mentioned above to say something about this obviously betrayal and anti-Herero/Nama agreement, which , if true, is designed to deny them what should be their legitimate due.

If the purported agreement does exist, then it makes nonsense of the whole negotiations exercise going on even now, and if the objective of these negotiations is to get reparation for the victims, whilst the agreement is saying that there will be no reparation payments, then the negotiators are busy with a deliberate broad day-light public exercise of dishonesty.

But the publication is not the only source that has stated that there will be no reparation.

The German Special Envoy and the German Ambassador to Namibia, Mr Schlaga, also said that although, as we hear, Germany will admit to genocide

and will apologise (to - ?), there will be “no reparation” and “no legal consequences”.

I do not take this as coincidental to what the bilateral agreement, as mentioned by the author, Mr Jan Grofe, has stated that it ‘made reparation payments void.’

Maybe, the two German envoys in their unrestrained and undiplomatic outbursts may have said so against the backdrop of their knowledge of the existence of this agreement, to remain consistent and to the letter and spirit of it.

As for the Konrad-Adenauer Foundation and the Namibia Institute for Democracy, why are they so reticent about this agreement, since the lawyer-cum-researcher that made this revelation in the 5<sup>th</sup> EDITION of that publication did it at your behest? Where or how did he get to know that there was such an agreement to refer to it? Could a person and a lawyer, for that matter, really refer to an agreement between two governments, without either having it in his hand or someone having shown it to him, or write to say that there was such an agreement?

Although the Namibian Special Envoy, Dr Ngavirue, denied the existence of such an agreement, adding that he never signed such an agreement, I shall rather give him the benefit of the doubt, but still wondering how this agreement could have escaped his pen, because it had to do with development aid to Namibia and he was the principal co-signer of development aid agreements to Namibia in his official capacity as the then Director-General of the National Planning Commission? Would the author of the publication (EDITION 5) agree with him that it doesn’t exist?

A reasonable and concerned person, who cared and is busy with the issue of the Herero and Nama Genocide and is negotiating reparations, should have been troubled by the mere mention of or reference to such an agreement, and should try to establish the veracity of its existence. However, this seems to bother no one, not least of whom are those Herero and Nama people who have been invited to serve the two governments’ interests. Don’t they have a moral duty to find out more about this agreement – being themselves descendants of the victims of the General von Trotha’s Extermination Orders?

It is here where Dr Zed and Mr Tjikuua, who spoke at length the other day about “Otjisuta”(=Otjiherero for Reparation) should show their seriousness and interest in finding out about this agreement since, they talk about negotiating reparation, whilst the purported agreement says that this is not to be.

The lawyer-cum-researcher who published this damning revelation must be made to account for where and how he got to know about this agreement.

That, to me, should be the logical curiosity, desire and the requisite step that ought to be taken by the Konrad-Adenauer Foundation, the Namibia Institute for Democracy, Mr Polenz and Dr Ngavirue, et al.

I have every reason to believe that an agreement in question should not be difficult for Special Envoy Polenz to get, if there was no deliberate intent to hide or destroy it and nor should it also be for Special Envoy Dr Ngavirue, since our government has all those “expert” Technical Committee members to do the research, anyway, instead of visiting historic sites, *ex post facto* - meaning after they had finalised their negotiating document already. What value would such visits add to a finished negotiating position document already in the hands of the Germans?

To make it easier for the Technical Committee members not to dig into the archives for the Namibian signed copy of this agreement, all that Dr Zed should do is to request a copy of it from the archive of the National Planning Commission or from the Ministry of Foreign Relations....

I hear that Special Envoy Polenz and his entourage of tour-guides are going to visit the farm “Otjunda” near Gobabis and the erstwhile Swakopmund concentration camp, when, as I said, the negotiating position document had already been finalised and handed over to the German Government in Germany not too long ago “ for studying”. What a Safari-like tourist trip and a waste of tax-payers money! Are these trips to get more information for an Addendum or Post Script of sorts?

Finally, I shall be failing to have said all I have said in this “Open Letter” without suggesting an alternative to this public display of bilateral dishonesty. Hence, the following:-

Stop the exclusionary so-called negotiations, **as a false start**, and do as they do when a sprinter has made a false start: they immediately stop the race and start it all over again!

In this case, invite the legitimate and acclaimed Traditional Leaders of the two victim communities of the Hereros and Namas, namely the Paramount Chief of the Ovaherero Peoples, Adv. Vekuii Rukoro and Chief David Frederick of the Nama Traditional Leaders Association to the negotiating table to join the discussion, **but not to join the Namibian Government negotiating structure, but to enter on their own identity as the true representatives of the victims.**

The first thing that must be done is, therefore, to set up an *ad hoc* committee to work out the modalities for their entry into the negotiations.

Such an ad hoc committee should be comprised of representatives from the two governments and the appointees of Paramount Chief Rukoro and Chief Frederick.

This must be accepted by the Namibia and German governments and the two mentioned communities Traditional Leaders **as a matter of principle** or **as a precondition**. Otherwise, this hasty and exclusionary negotiations may end up the same way as the so-called “Special Initiative” that Ambassador Schlaga was trying to show-case as a success story on the screen on Sunday, showing people saying “We are happy” or “I am happy”, etc. but to which Special Envoy, Dr Ngavirue, only this Monday morning, on the Otjiherero Radio Service “Keetute” said that, “Jari ovina viokutuuovisa uriri”(meaning, it was things just to bluff us).

This may sound **too-bitter-a-pill** to swallow, perhaps, to the two governments that started the show, but mature people, and for a better cause, can accept mistakes or a wrong move and start it all over again.

That is my suggestion and, with that, I rest my case!

Festus U. Muundjua.

(A concerned descendant of the victims of the 1904 – 1908 Genocide)

