

Namibia's bilateral relations with Germany: A crucial relationship

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Introduction

Namibia has traversed a long and bitter road towards independence through a struggle to free itself from the bondage of apartheid and colonialism and accept the challenges of nationhood. It reminds me of the following quotation cited by my friend and colleague, Prof. Keto Mshigeni, who writes that, when an Egyptian King asked Euclid, the famous Greek mathematician of Alexandria in 3 BC, how one could learn his theorems of geometry in a more expeditious manner, the answer given was, “there is no royal road to geometry”.¹ What we know for certain is that, as David Jessop states, –²

[e]very nation and culture has a knowledge of where it has come from, an awareness of shared experience and a sense of its place in the world.

We have not only willingly accepted the challenges of nationhood, but have also used our experience acquired during the course of the struggle to chart the way forward with regard to all aspects of life, including crafting our foreign policy, as we took our place amongst the nations of the world. As David Jessop continues to write, –³

[h]istory and smallness together have distilled and elevated this into an often intense requirement for ownership and a constant and passionate defence of national identity and sovereignty.

This should certainly be seen against the events as described by Dr Henry Kissinger in *The new world order*.⁴

In the seventeenth century, France under Cardinal Richelieu introduced the modern approach to international relations, based on the nation-state and motivated by national interest as its ultimate purpose. In the eighteenth century, Great Britain elaborated the concept of balance of power, which dominated European diplomacy for the next 200 years. In the nineteenth century,

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1 See Taylor (2000:52).

2 Jessop (2008:1).

3 (*ibid.*). He is referring to the Caribbean experience, but it applies equally to Namibia, except that the territory of Namibia is large despite the population being small.

4 Kissinger (1994).

Metternich's Austria reconstructed the Concept of Europe and Bismarck's Germany dismantled it, reshaping European diplomacy into a cold-blooded game of power politics.

Not surprisingly, this was the period in world history when Africa and greater parts of the world were held in colonial bondage by Western powers. In this respect, there was a time when it seemed almost impossible to escape from that bondage. However, between the 1940s and 1960s, a great number of African colonies and other dependent territories around the globe achieved their freedom and independence in the long run. Since then, many of these developing countries have made great progress in a number of human endeavours as full members of the United Nations (UN). Many of those countries, as UN members, subscribe to the recommendations made by former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans and his team, published in a book entitled *Cooperating for peace: The Global Agenda for the 1990s and beyond*.⁵ They point out the following.⁶

We believe that even if the world can never be made absolutely safe for all its peoples, we are beginning to learn how to make it very much safer than it has been. ... [The] phenomenon of economic and cultural community [has implied that] nations are finding it progressively easier to talk together, build processes and institutions together, advance common interests and resolve common problems. They are beginning to learn that their best interests are advanced not by a culture of conflict, but by a culture of cooperation.

Truly, today, two decades after Namibia's independence, it should be acknowledged that our people have made steady strides in advancing their national development and reconstruction in a number of areas.

Namibia's approach to making foreign policy

Before dealing with the detail of Namibia's bilateral relations with Germany, it is essential to understand the genesis of Namibia's foreign policy and its application.

It is evident that Namibia's foreign policy has been shaped by its liberation struggle. Importantly, the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) – as the country's main liberation movement – achieved a great deal of recognition from the international community, led by the UN. It was this recognition that contributed to SWAPO working as a non-state actor on the future of Namibia with the UN for a considerable period before Independence. This no doubt helped the SWAPO movement to develop a foreign policy framework that helped to maintain and run SWAPO's external structures, including its missions around the world. Of course, this policy framework was revisited and transformed after the country's independence in 1990 in order to reflect the changing

5 Evans (1993).

6 (ibid.:182).

circumstances. As the now retired Maj. Gen. Charles Namoloh, then Minister of Defence, has stated, –⁷

[t]he end of the Cold War ushered in a period of peaceful co-existence among nations. The independence of Namibia on 21st March 1990 brought new opportunities for the people of the country who suffered colonial oppression for over a century. The national independence brought to an end a bitter liberation war which claimed many lives of Namibians.

As former West German Chancellor Willy Brandt⁸ stressed in his book, *People and politics*, there is a need for nations to face up to change and adapt in order to meet the new requirements. In 1990, it was Namibia's turn to do likewise. Namibia's first Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon. Dr Theo-Ben Gurirab, described the objectives of the country's foreign policy thus:⁹

... the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is to position itself to address changes in both the domestic and external environment in which it has to fulfil its two primary functions. These functions are namely: to positively portray the relations of Namibia internationally, and to continuously analyse and interpret the world around us with a view to ensure the security and prosperity of our country and its people.

The above-mentioned objectives have been the main focus of Namibia's approach to its foreign relations. As can be seen from various initiatives, Namibia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs also embarked on a number of reforms of the country's foreign policy. These involved training and general workshops aimed at the sensitisation of staff and officials engaged in foreign affairs. This point was equally highlighted by HE Dr Sam Nujoma, founding President of the Republic of Namibia, who stated the following:¹⁰

I am sure that the recently concluded Workshop on Economic Diplomacy, which was organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has further provided you and other Namibian Diplomats with the required tools and skills to effectively promote investment and trade opportunities as well as joint ventures which are available to investors from Malaysia and other parts of the world.

It is in this context that I agree with Ambassador George C McGhee of the United States (US) when he says the following:¹¹

I hold a strong belief in the importance of effective diplomacy in improving relations between nations. ... I use the word diplomacy here in its broadest sense. I do not wish to confine it just

7 See the presentation by Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Charles Namoloh, Minister of Defence, to Namibia's Parliamentary Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security, in a Workshop conducted from 1 to 11 August 2011.

8 Brandt (1978:494-502).

9 GRN (2000:65).

10 GRN (2004).

11 McGhee (1987:vii, 13, 49).

to ambassadors making speeches or giving dinner parties or negotiating treaties. I would define it to include all negotiations and exchanges of information and views across national borders, whether in the private or public sector, for the purpose of lessening tensions and effecting international agreements.

A major reinforcement to Namibia's foreign policy was the adoption of the White Paper on Namibia's Foreign Policy and Diplomacy Management, published in March 2004. This document clearly emphasises economic diplomacy, calling for economic development within the context of economic diplomacy. This shift was necessitated by the government's desire to increase investment and economic growth in post-Independence Namibia.

This policy framework was implemented through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its various foreign missions. For instance, the following internal discussion that I conducted at the Namibian Embassy in Brussels illustrates how the Namibian missions abroad implemented the policy. I identified the following areas as crucial to the conduct of a successful economic diplomacy:¹²

- Carrying the banner of economic diplomacy
- Transforming the concept of economic diplomacy into a working tool in order for the Namibian Government to execute its diplomatic functions in the most effective manner
- Constant renewal of efforts in order to be on top of issues, and
- Concentration on issues which would allow embassy or mission staff to move an extra mile in task accomplishment.

Most ambassadors compete with each other as they represent the interests of their various countries in a given host country. Here, we are reminded by the former British Ambassador to the US, Christopher Meyer, when he says that –¹³

[s]peed and technologies are certainly powerful weapons in the diplomat's armoury; but without quality and context, information delivered fast is without merit.

I particularly enjoyed reading his book, which deals with his ambassadorial work in the US and his amusing reference to leading personalities in the host country as the *Big Beasts*. In applying this approach, Ambassador Meyer states –¹⁴

I wanted everybody at the Embassy, at their different levels, to develop their own contacts across the US administration and Congress. Sometimes the first intimation of a policy decision would come from a relatively junior source.

12 Staff meeting chaired by Ambassador Peter H Katjavivi at the Namibian Embassy in Brussels, March 2004.

13 Meyer (2005:63).

14 (ibid.:210).

My own contribution to this process was to deal with the 'Big Beasts', their deputies and their closest advisors. This meant the National Security Adviser to the President; Vice-President; the Secretary of State; the Secretary of Defense; the chairman and senior members of key committees in the Senate and the House of Representatives; and the top newspaper columnists.

I recall, during staff meetings at the Namibian Embassies in both Brussels and Berlin, having encouraged our diplomats to intensify wide-ranging contacts in the areas of trade and investment, among others.

Just before I arrived in Berlin as Ambassador, I was reliably informed that our Trade Attaché there was a very competent officer who stood out as a voice for all other trade attachés from other developing nations with embassies in Berlin. She was so competent that, when she left, the gap created was so big that we almost failed to fill it with another equally competent officer. However, after a long search, we managed to find another competent person. This illustrates how diplomats have a key role to front the development needs of their nations.

John Coles, a leading British diplomat, had this to say on the subject:¹⁵

I detect a need to reassert the role of officials in policy-making, to make a plan that they are looked to as the primary source of advice, but are equally expected to be open to ideas from all sources, inside and outside government, and to channel the best possible advice to ministers regardless of its source.

He further underscores the range of training made available to British civil servants, revealing that "more specialized training is given to civil servants nowadays". He adds that, "in the Foreign Office, many of us spent time at the London Business School on management courses". In this context, it is essential that we stress the importance of training and retraining our civil servants. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the Namibia Institute of Public Administration and Management (NIPAM) established in 2011 will team up with the relevant tertiary institutions in Namibia to provide the necessary training that will embrace policymaking courses, and innovations that could contribute towards making our overall 'civil service machine' more efficient in the long run. Most importantly, it is a worthwhile effort to internationally benchmark Namibia's training certification so that our graduates can be suitable for jobs anywhere across the globe. Furthermore, it is hoped that the establishment of this training institution will help "revalue public service and rekindle the enthusiasm that made people become public servants in the first place". No doubt it is hoped that the new institution will reinforce the culture of thinking and acting: the need to ensure civil servants do follow-ups, to the extent that they might ask themselves some of the following questions posed by John Coles:¹⁶

15 Coles (2000:159).

16 (ibid.:161).

We needed to ask ourselves searching questions about policy. Did we devote enough time to developing new policies? Did we know enough about how other countries were tackling the same problems? Did we think sufficiently long-term, sufficiently strategically? Did ministers always act in such a way to get the best out of the civil service machine?

These and many more questions are the kinds of issues that are being debated amongst our civil servants and diplomats nowadays.

John Coles compliments Foreign Minister Gareth Evans on his admirable initiative regarding the Australian experience in foreign policy formulation.¹⁷ Evans refers to his studies undertaken in 1987, with particular reference to that country's relationship to an Asian Pacific region. This interesting period marked a policy shift when Australia moved towards promoting "more effective economic co-operation in their region and inter-government dialogue to advance common interests".¹⁸

Coles argues that –

[t]he concept of national interests necessitates the starting point in making decisions, although the elements that constitute national interest are not necessarily self-evident. ... I group Australia's interests in three categories – geopolitical or strategic, economic and trade, and 'being a good international citizen'.

He adds another vital point, namely that "capacity to influence must be assessed". He stresses that –¹⁹

[e]ffective management of foreign affairs depends not just on being able to recognize opportunities for influence but also on developing and constantly refining priorities ...

Coles commends, in terms of the substance and process, the manner in which Foreign Minister Evans crafted Australia's foreign relations in the world of the 1990s.²⁰ In this respect, our policymakers and intellectuals need to pay far more attention to the experiences of other countries if we are to remedy our own shortcomings. It is clear when reviewing Namibia's foreign policy that there is a need to reinforce economic diplomacy with a view to advancing the struggle for economic emancipation.

One important aspect determining Namibia's foreign policy has been the work of the Namibian Defence Force (NDF) through the establishment of joint commissions on defence and security with all its neighbouring countries. Such joint commissions are

17 (ibid.:167–168).

18 (ibid.:169).

19 (ibid.:205).

20 See Coles (2000).

there to promote harmony and apply conflict resolutions to potential problems and challenges that might arise.

Former Minister of Defence Namoloh commented as follows on the progress made since Namibia's independence in this regard:²¹

We have moved from the era of confrontation that characterized Southern Africa, since the 1960s to the end of the 1980s, to cooperation among the defence forces in the region and elsewhere.

The NDF has been an active participant in a number of peacekeeping operations organised by the UN around the globe. The role played by the NDF in this regard is in keeping with Article 96 of the Namibian Constitution.

Overall, Namibia's foreign policy can be characterised as proactive and reactive, based on circumstances; but the general trend displayed has been a proactive one. Examples of this latter stance include the following:

- Intervention in the Democratic Republic of the Congo war in 2000–2001
- Namibia's strong position on the negotiations for a fair deal under the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) of the European Union (EU) to allow protection of its infant industries
- Namibia's in support of the African Union's concern about foreign intervention in the Libyan crisis in 2011
- Its continued advocacy for the need to reform the UN Security Council in order to ensure equal continental representation, and
- Its continued advocacy for the need to strengthen the voice and representation of the developing countries, especially those in Africa, in the 'Bretton Woods' institutions (i.e. the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund).

For a small country like Namibia – that is, *small* in terms of population – it has done well on the world stage in raising its voice to the necessary heights where there has been a need.

Namibian–German diplomacy since Independence

Namibia's diplomatic relations with Germany have had their own challenges and opportunities. Soon after Namibia's independence in 1990, the country established diplomatic relations with Germany. With Germany having colonised Namibia from 1884

²¹ See the presentation by Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Charles Namoloh, Minister of Defence, to Namibia's Parliamentary Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security, in a Workshop conducted from 1 to 11 August 2011.

to 1915, the relationship between the countries marked the beginning of a new era.²² However, while we acknowledge the process where Namibia and Germany started a new chapter in their relations, it is pertinent that we appreciate the efforts of those who laid the groundwork which led to these successful relations. The SWAPO leadership in exile worked closely with leading personalities of the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD/Social Democratic Party of Germany), the Green Party, and the long-serving German Foreign Minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher. This relationship extended to working with churches, student/youth and solidarity organisations, foundations and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Herr Genscher and leading personalities within the SPD, in particular, played a vital role in facilitating meetings between SWAPO and German leaders and institutions in that country.²³ Equally important to note is that Genscher was anxious that the German-speaking community in Namibia be given the truth and reality about SWAPO and the UN's agenda.²⁴ Understandably, they did not want the white community in the then South West Africa to be blinded by the South African Government's negative propaganda about SWAPO's efforts. Genscher's even-handed approach in this regard was much appreciated by SWAPO.

Namibian–German bilateral relations were established against the background of a resolution passed in the German Parliament, which stated the following:²⁵

Since Namibia's independence in March 1990, friendly and comprehensive relations have developed between Namibia and the Federal Republic of Germany. The Federal Republic of Germany acknowledges a 'special responsibility' for Namibia, expressed officially in the parliamentary resolution of March 1989, entitled "The Special Responsibility of the Federal Republic of Germany for Namibia and all its Citizens", in which the German Bundestag [German Parliament] called on the government to develop and cultivate special relations with the independent Namibia. In that Germany took into account its responsibility for the country's colonial past as well as the government's commitment to the independence process, especially as part of the Western Contact Group.

This was subsequently endorsed by both Presidents Sam Nujoma and Roman Herzog, of Namibia and Germany, respectively. This happened during President Nujoma's first state visit to Germany in 1996.

22 For historical background, see Katjavivi (1988, 2008).

23 In 1973, a SWAPO delegation which included its President Sam Nujoma, Bishop Colin Winter of the Anglican Church, Ewald Katjivena, Ben Amathila and the author visited Bonn. During the visit, the delegation met Erhard Eppler, by then Minister for Economic Cooperation (1968–1974) and Chairman of the SPD in Baden-Württemberg (1973–1981), as well as Chairperson of the Committee on Basic Values. Notably, it was during Eppler's time as Minister for Economic Cooperation that the Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ, today the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, GIZ) was founded. The delegation was also scheduled to meet President Gustav Heinemann, but the meeting did not take place for technical reasons.

24 Vergau (2010).

25 German Parliamentary Resolution on the eve of Namibia's Independence, 1989.

Since then, a number of agreements dealing with their bilateral relations have been signed between the two countries. The two nations have also witnessed the exchange of high-level reciprocal visits, reflecting the special relations that had developed between them.

Official visits – Germany to Namibia

- **1995**, September: Chancellor Dr Helmut Kohl (1982–1998; member of the Christian Democratic Union, CDU)
- **1998**, March: Official state visit by President Dr Roman Herzog (1994–1999; CDU)
- **2003**, April: President of the Bundestag (Speaker of Parliament), Wolfgang Thierse (SPD)
- **2003**, October: Minister of Foreign Affairs, Joschka Fischer (Alliance 90/The Greens)
- **2004**, August: Minister of Economic Cooperation and Development, Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul (SPD) attended the centenary commemorations of the 1904–1908 uprising
- **2006**, October: Hartwig Fischer, MP (CDU), headed a delegation of German MPs to Namibia
- **2008**, April: President of the Bundestag, Prof. Norbert Lammert (CDU)
- **2008**, January: Delegation of MPs comprising members of the Parliamentary Budget Committee, the Foreign Office, and the Ministry of Defence
- **2008**, February: Minister of Education and Research, Dr Annette Schavan (CDU)
- **2008**, February: 20-person business delegation visited to inform themselves on investment opportunities
- **2010**, February: Minister of Economic Cooperation and Development, Mr Dirk Niebel (Free Democratic Party, FDP), attended the topping-off ceremony for the Ohorongo Cement Factory in Otavi, which is Germany's biggest investment in Namibia
- **2011**, August: Minister Niebel's visit was specially designed to help develop cooperation in vocational training and resource management
- **2012**, February: Ambassador Walter Lindner, the Director-General of African Affairs at the Foreign Ministry
- **2012**, February: Members of the German Budget Committee – Herbert Frankenhauser (CDU/Christian Social Union, CSU), Klaus Branden (SPD) and Heinz-Peter Haustein (FDP) – informed themselves about the effectiveness of equipment assistance to Namibia
- **2012**, April: Prof. Annette Schavan, Minister of Education and Research (CDU) and her delegation held talks with senior government officials and visited German-supported projects

- **2012**, 24 August–1 September: Niema Movassat, MP (Left Party),²⁶ paid courtesy calls on the Namibian Government, Parliament and other institutions, and
- **2013**, January: Former Minister Heide-Marie Wieczorek-Zeul met members of the Namibian–German Parliamentary Friendship Group and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, besides visiting some of the communities in Otjimbingwe, Erongo Region, benefiting from the Namibian–German Special Initiative Programme.

Official visits – Namibia to Germany

- **1996**, June: Official state visit by President Dr Sam Nujoma to Germany
- **1997**, October: Prime Minister Dr Hage G Geingob (Berlin, Bonn, Dusseldorf)
- **1998**, February: Speaker of Parliament Dr Mosé P Tjiteadero (Berlin, Bonn, Bremen, Dresden)
- **1999**, June: SWAPO Party of Namibia Secretary-General, Hifikepunye Pohamba, and delegation (Berlin, Bonn, Rostock, Schwerin)
- **2000**, July: Prime Minister Geingob (Expo 2000, Hanover)
- **2000**, August: President Nujoma (Expo 2000, Hanover)
- **2000**, November: Prime Minister Geingob (Berlin)
- **2002**, June: Official working visit by President Nujoma to Germany
- **2005**, November: Official state visit by President Hifikepunye Pohamba (Berlin, Hamburg, Stuttgart)
- **2006**, December: Speaker of Parliament Dr Theo-Ben Gurirab (Africa Forum 2006 entitled “Fostering Entrepreneurial Spirit”, within the programme “Building Global Cooperation – New Alliances with Africa”, Wittenburg)
- **2007**, March: Minister of Environment and Tourism Willem Konjore and his delegation participated in the annual International Tourism Bourse in Berlin
- **2007**, July: Official visit by Speaker of Parliament Dr Theo-Ben Gurirab and a multiparty parliamentary delegation to the Bundestag, which concluded with an agreement that dialogue should be the key focus for resolution of issues, and the need to form inter-parliamentary friendship groups
- **2010**, August: Official visit by Minister of Youth, National Service, Sport and Culture, Kazenambo Kazenambo, MP
- **2010**, November: Working visit to the Munich Airport by Deputy Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration, Elia G Kaiyamo, MP
- **2010**, November: Namibian Governing Party Chief Whip and former Ambassador of Namibia to Germany, Prof. Peter Katjavivi, MP (guest speaker at an International Conference on the Joint Africa–EU Strategy to assess whether the Strategy has

²⁶ It should be noted that Hon. Movassat and his Left Party (Die Linke) colleagues were particularly instrumental in calling for justice to prevail in terms of the wrongs done to Namibian communities during the colonial occupation by German forces. Likewise, the SPD and Alliance 90/The Greens have presented a number of motions on Namibia in the Bundestag. The most recent of these was tabled on 20 March 2012.

met Africa's expectations; the Conference attracted great interest and presented a high-profile platform for Namibia)

- **2011**, March: Prime Minister Nahas Angula (keynote address entitled “The future of the Namibian nation”, Berlin International Economics Congress)
- **2011**, October: Minister of Education Dr Abraham Iyambo visited to discuss bilateral cooperation to strengthen vocational education and training in Namibia
- **2011**, October: A high-level delegation led by Minister of Youth, National Service, Sport and Culture Kazenambo Kazenambo, MP, which included traditional leaders of communities affected by atrocities committed by German colonial troops, went to Berlin to collect human remains for repatriation to Namibia
- **2012**, January: Minister of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, John Mutorwa, invited by his German counterpart, Ilse Aigner, attended and participated in the Fourth Berlin Agricultural Ministers' Summit
- **2012**, March: Members of the Namibian Parliamentary Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security – Paulus Kapia, Anton von Wietersheim, Ignatius Shixwameni and Lucia Witbooi – visited to promote open dialogue between the two Parliaments
- **2012**, June: Minister of Trade and Industry, Dr Hage G Geingob, attended the Conference on Sustainable Raw Materials Industry and Development Policy in Berlin
- **2012**, June: Managing Director of NamPower, Paulinus Shilamba, and his delegation including the Chief Executive Officer of the Electricity Control Board, Siseho Simasiku (attendance of the Africa Energy Forum in Berlin)
- **2012**, October: Official visit by the Chairperson of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Economics, Natural Resources and Public Administration, Ben Amathila, MP, and his delegation at the invitation of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, and
- **2013**, March: Members of the Namibian–German Parliamentary Friendship Group (PFG), headed by Prof. Peter H Katjavivi, visited as guests of the German Parliament at the invitation by the German–SADC Parliamentary Friendship Group and meet the President of the Bundestag, Prof. Norbert Lammert; and Secretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr Emily Haber, accompanied by the Regional Adviser for Sub-Saharan Africa and the Sahel Zone in the Foreign Office, Ambassador Egon Kochanke.

Namibian Government officials also regularly attend the annual International Tourism Bourse Expo in Berlin.

The above list is not exhaustive.

It is noticeable that the inaugural visits following Independence were both at high level and frequent. However, visits have dwindled from the German side in subsequent years. This is particularly the case with respect to the positions of head of state (President) and

head of government (Chancellor). Indeed, in his characteristic style, Willy Brandt once observed the following in reference to such state visits:²⁷

I sometimes wonder – and this applied in part to my time as Chancellor – if these trips bore a sensible relationship to the results obtained.

He went on as follows:²⁸

Personal contact between leading politicians can often be beneficial, of course, because they genuinely do represent an international version of the extended family.

Besides, in interpersonal relations, non-verbal communication (body language) is instrumental in winning hearts and creating a consensus on sensitive and/or critical matters such as those that characterise the Namibian–German past. Therefore, technological communication alone minus personal visits cannot be an option for high-level relations between Namibia and Germany.

Considerable efforts were in fact made by Namibia to invite the former President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Dr Horst Kohler, to visit Namibia during his term in office, and those efforts were renewed with regard to his successors. So far, these efforts have been to no avail. This issue preoccupies the Namibian Embassy in Berlin, which continues to lobby for such a visit to take place. Several factors are at play in this hesitation to oblige the invitations. The most important is reference to the subject of the atrocities committed against Namibians during the German colonial era (1904–1908), which Namibians demand be officially acknowledged as genocide by the German Government, together with reparations for the crimes committed during that time. These two topics continue to be a thorn in the side of high-ranking German officials.

Notably, too, on 10 May 2010, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom and the Regional Office for the Berlin-Brandenburg in Berlin hosted a major national event in Berlin whose major theme was to celebrate 20 years of partnership between Germany and Namibia. As the famous saying goes, –²⁹

[i]t is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.

Former President of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, has commented thus on parliamentary contact between countries:³⁰

27 Brandt (1978:153).

28 (ibid.).

29 Eleanor Roosevelt (1930s).

30 Gorbachev (1987).

I think the new style in international foreign relations implies extending their framework far beyond the limits of diplomatic process. Parliaments along with governments are becoming increasingly active participants in international contacts, and this is an encouraging development.

German official development aid to Namibia

Bilateral aid via the German Government

As can be seen from the above, early interactions between Namibia and Germany were marked by high-profile visits. Likewise, it is also noteworthy that both governments acknowledged and emphasised the shared special relationship based on our common past. In this respect, the heads of state of both countries have often spoken at state occasions and characterised the ties between Namibia and Germany as being close and special. These sentiments are very much in line with the resolution adopted by the German Parliament prior to Namibia's independence, namely one that welcomed such independence and pledged Germany's special obligation towards Namibia.³¹

There is no doubt that Namibia continues to benefit from the substantial bilateral development assistance programme provided by Germany. This programme started soon after Independence, and targeted the following three broad focal areas:

- The sustainable development and management of natural resources
- Ensuring sustainable economic development, and
- The development of transport infrastructure.

Notably, the total volume of official development aid (ODA) via German bilateral technical and financial cooperation commitments to Namibia since 1990 – including the former German Development Service, the former InWEnt (Capacity Building International), the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ), the Centre for International Migration (CIM), humanitarian assistance, civil society organisations and political foundations – amounts to some N\$7 billion as at 2013.

Furthermore, German development assistance emphasises issues relating to poverty reduction, the creation of employment, the promotion of good governance, gender equity, land reform, and the fight against HIV and AIDS.

The Namibian–German development assistance programme is subjected to biennial review. The author has participated in these review meetings in the past in his capacity as Namibia's Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany, and later as the Director-General of the NPC. This exercise is essential to both governments to ensure that such assistance is being implemented according to the expectations of both countries, and the

31 Handover Report by Prof. Peter H Katjavivi, the then outgoing Namibian Ambassador in Berlin to Germany, to the Namibian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, April 2008.

meetings provide an excellent opportunity to view progress in various projects being implemented as well as serving as an occasion for further strengthening the ties between the two countries.

The most recent bilateral negotiations were held in Germany during May 2011. On that occasion, both governments reaffirmed their commitment to work towards strengthening their cooperation. During the meeting, Dirk Niebel, the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, met his Namibian counterpart, Mr Tom Alweendo, my successor as Director-General of the NPC, and “pledged his country’s commitment to continue implementing a policy of friendly development between the two countries”.³² During these negotiations, Germany committed to provide N\$1.27 billion in ODA to Namibia over a period of two years, namely 2011–2012. Of this amount, about 40% consisted of concessional loans – mainly for the Lower Orange Hydro-electric Power Scheme Project. About 60% will be grants in the form of technical and financial cooperation, such as €8.5 million devoted to enhancing the transport network, and supporting land reform and land management in Namibia’s communal areas, and €8 million to the University of Namibia’s Faculty of Engineering on the Ongwediva Campus.

The outcome of the 2011 negotiations are interesting if one looks at the amount of ODA provided in terms of the breakdown between grants and loans. During the 2011 negotiations, the grant component was more than its loan counterpart, which is a departure from the pattern of the previous three to four years. Moreover, if one looks at Germany’s Development Cooperation Policy and the views of Minister Niebel – which were strongly geared towards private sector development, economic development, trade and investment, and ODA that supports Germany’s economic interests – the outcome of the 2011 negotiations was quite unique. During the biennial negotiations covering 2009–2010, loan funding amounted to €85 million vis-à-vis grant funds, which totalled some €35.5 million. Furthermore, Minister Niebel visited Namibia in September 2011 and toured the country to familiarise himself with the various projects being funded under German ODA and, in particular, the Ohorongo Cement Company in Otavi.

ODA as grants and/or loans

An area where concern has been expressed in recent years is in relation to the size of grants vis-à-vis the loans made available by the German Government to its Namibian counterpart. There is a perception within Namibian Government circles that loans have overtaken grants from the available resources that are currently being made available by Germany to Namibia. This point has been disputed by the German development partners.

In my opinion, this issue of grants vis-à-vis loans needs to be seen from a wider perspective, namely the ODA ‘landscape’ in which Namibia currently finds itself. As an

32 Personal communication.

upper-middle-income country, Namibia's pure grant funding has become increasingly scarce and very few donors continue to provide grant assistance; those who do so, provide aid on a limited scale only or offer it as 'seed money' to facilitate trade cooperation or partnerships (notably Sweden and Finland). Furthermore, it is important to note that ODA is defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and others as grants or loans undertaken by the official sector for the promotion of economic development and welfare as the main objective. To qualify as ODA, loans need to have a grant element of at least 25%.³³ The Namibian Government often only placed emphasis on the grant part, and did not see the loans as part of ODA. The German Government, however, views such loans as an important contribution to ODA, given the concessional terms upon which they are provided. One of the challenges experienced was that the German Government would in good faith announce some concessional loan packages and proposals, which in some cases were not taken up by the Namibian Government, since the Ministry of Finance – which has the mandate to approve loans – is required to endorse the taking up of such loans. Thus, if one views the commitment and disbursement figures of Germany's ODA to Namibia, disbursements have not been that good for precisely this reason: the amount of loans announced at the bilateral negotiations as part of the ODA package is not always taken up by the Namibian side for various reasons.

Nonetheless, Namibia's German partners maintain that the ODA they provide to Namibia through grants is still higher than the loans they have offered. Arguments over this matter continue, with both sides holding on to their respective positions.

It should be stated here that both Namibia and Germany are committed to the principles set out in the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action on Aid Effectiveness, and there are opportunities for revisiting this and other related issues during the course of their biennial negotiations. As most good partners, it is important for both governments to utilise established forums and thereby maintain dialogue for the purpose of finding solutions to whatever challenges might arise from time to time. The Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action stressed the need for a new paradigm that focused on partnership in development cooperation based on the principles of inclusive ownership, transparency, predictability and mutual accountability. Thus, it goes without saying that the stakeholders within the Namibian–German partnership should become aware of each other's perspectives and be ready to deal with any emerging challenges.

Implementing partners

Germany's development aid is provided in the form of financial and technical cooperation and is administered by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

³³ See the OECD definition of *ODA*; available at <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/34086975.pdf>, last accessed 21 September 2013.

(Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung/BMZ). On behalf of the BMZ, German organisations cooperate with their Namibian partners in various programmes and projects. A case in point is the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the new agency formed after the merger of the following:

- German Technical Cooperation (Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit/GTZ)
- German Development Service (Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst/DED), and
- InWEnt – Capacity Building International, Germany.

Another government-related body is the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), which is responsible for Germany's financial aid programmes on a bilateral, multilateral and private level. Also, the German Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (Bundesanstalt für Geowissenschaften und Rohstoffe/BGR), the Centre for International Migration and Development (CIM), and the German Investment and Development Company (Deutsche Investitions- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft/DEG) are examples of similar German organisations which are active in Namibia.

Aid via German NGOs³⁴

Some of the German Government's development aid is channelled through German NGOs, international organisations and multilateral institutions. The German public strongly supports the agenda for social, health and environmental issues in Germany and abroad.

The German NGO community can be more or less grouped together in four categories:

- Political foundations
- Church-based organisations (CBOs), and
- Local organisations.

Political foundations are affiliated to major German political parties. They are involved in political lobbying and awareness-raising and provide assistance to NGO development projects.

CBOs were the first to receive public funding in the early 1960s. Since then, collaboration with the German Government has increased and procedures adapted to allow for the funding of projects and programmes. Some examples of CBOs are Brot für die Welt ("Bread for the World"), which works in close cooperation with the Evangelical Lutheran

³⁴ See also NID (2009), which includes some Namibian NGOs working closely with those in Germany to provide humanitarian assistance within Namibia.

Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN), Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (Evangelical Church in Germany), Johanniter Hilfswerk (Knights of St John), and Miserior (Catholic Central Office).

Of the large number of other development organisations, many have grant programmes for supporting development and environmental NGOs in Namibia. They obtain their finances from various sources, including the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. Other sources of revenue include public donations and contributions, legacies, sale of products, and consultancy services.

The following are some examples of German NGOs that collaborate with Namibia at some level.

Senior Experten Service (SES)

Senior Experten Service (SES), a non-profit organisation, is the Foundation of German Industry for International Cooperation (Stiftung der deutschen Wirtschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit). The SES offers interested retirees the opportunity to pass on their skills and knowledge to others, both within Germany and abroad. They work in a voluntary capacity as Senior Experts, helping to train both specialist workers and management staff.

Solidarity Service International (SODI)

Solidarity Service International (SODI) campaigns for solidarity and a just and peaceful world in which a natural way of life is preserved. SODI is also a non-profit association, and is independent of particular political and ideological views. SODI was founded in 1990, and succeeded the former Solidarity Committee of the German Democratic Republic. Significant in its constitution and development was its participation in the East German 'round table for development policy, as well as the strong will of its members and donors to advocate international solidarity in a united Germany.

Presently, the association has more than 300 members. Furthermore, it is supported by volunteers, grass-roots initiatives and donor groups. SODI is funded by donations, membership fees and public funds. Since 1994 they have received yearly accreditation from the German Central Institute for Social Issues (Stiftung Deutsches Zentralinstitut für soziale Fragen/DZI). SODI is a member of civil society networks and participates in national and international campaigns to reach its goals. SODI and its Namibian partner, the Clay House Project, constructed 600 dry toilets in Otjiwarongo and in rural areas in northern Namibia. These facilities serve over 4,500 people, who actively took part in the construction of the toilets and who learned how to maintain them themselves.

Weltfriedensdienst eV (WFD)

The WFD was founded in 1959 in Berlin. Together with other organisations and initiatives in southern and northern Germany, the WFD advocates and works for social justice, the observation and implementation of human rights, equal support of both women and men in development processes, and sustainable economic and agricultural activities which preserve natural resources. The WFD runs several projects in Namibia, including a crisis management fund for orphans, and a project for children living in Katutura.

Ombili Stiftung eV

Supported largely by the Lions' Club of Mosbach in Germany, Ombili was founded in 1989. The Ombili Foundation and School, located in northern Namibia, is dedicated to providing education and training to the San people of Namibia. From 1990 to 1997, projects such as a 4-ha vegetable garden under irrigation were established. Traditional and other handicrafts are encouraged and taught, and the products are bought by the Foundation to be sold locally or they are exported. A community centre, a school, a workshop, a kindergarten, a hostel, classrooms, and staff housing for teachers and employees at the Foundation have been constructed with the sponsorships of financial contributions by German NGOs as well as donations by private individuals.

Freundeskreis Gesundheit für Ombili Berlin-Brandenburg eV

This medical association is very helpful in assisting with San community project activities in Namibia. For several years, they have organised a biannual concert in Berlin for the benefit of the San.

Bürgersinn Stiftung/Baumgartsbrunn Farm School

The Bürgersinn Foundation supports the Baumgartsbrunn Farm School project in Namibia in particular. The project is committed to helping young women and children to help themselves. A primary school and a guest farm belong to the project as well. The principal goal for Baumgartsbrunn is to secure the existence of this model project of North-South cooperation beyond the death of its founder, Helmut Bleks, and to sustainably develop the project for the future. The project is run by the Helmut Bleks Foundation in Germany in collaboration with the Bürgersinn Foundation.

Deutsch-Namibische-Entwicklungsgeellschaft eV/German-Namibian Development Society

Since the formation of the German-Namibian Development Society in 1983, it has worked towards improving living conditions in Namibia and has been supporting long-

term as well as sustainable and effective development projects in Namibia, especially in rural areas. The Society is active in the fields of medical care, education and vocational training, scholarships, student exchanges, the establishment of community centres, support of cultural and science-related institutions, and sustainable agriculture projects.

Deutsch-Namibischer Hilfsfonds Quandt eV/Quandt Development Trust Fund

The Quandt Development Trust Fund was founded after the German Honorary Consul for Namibia, Georg Quandt, who supported projects for the poor in Namibia for 30 years as a private initiative in order to increase the effectiveness of development assistance. The main goals of this initiative are fighting poverty; anti-AIDS programmes; support of women's cooperatives; supervision of kindergartens, nursing homes and orphanages; care for bush hospitals; school buildings and equipment for communities and universities; and cultural exchanges. Specific assistance from the Fund has arrived during periods of natural catastrophes such as floods or drought, when they have donated containers of new clothes, blankets and medical equipment to Namibia.

NGOs that help children

- HILFE FÜR NAMIBIA eV/HELP FOR NAMIBIA

This association was established in 1988. Since then, it has a partner association in Windhoek who assists in identifying projects in need of help. Several institutions in Namibia are supported by Help for Namibia, including the hostel in Rietoog, Association for Children with Language, Speech and Hearing Impairments of Namibia (CLaSH), the Gobabis Kindergarten, the Rakutuka Primary School, the retirement home in Rehoboth, the Kombat Primary School, and the Khoandawes Primary School.

- KINDERHILFE IN NAMIBIA eV/HELP FOR CHILDREN IN NAMIBIA

This NGO supports self-help projects in local communities regarding the construction, enlargement and improvement of day-care centres, pre-primary schools (kindergartens) and schools. Kinderhilfe also provides secondary school learners with scholarships. The organisation realised the need for classrooms, pre-primary schools, kindergartens and school equipment. Institutions that are involved in the education process are supported by way of building materials for -

- the construction and renovation of classrooms and of pre-primary schools
- the construction, upgrading and renovation of kindergartens
- the maintenance, renovation and upgrading of hostels, and
- the improvement of infrastructure, e.g. storerooms, sports facilities and toilets, as well as educational equipment.

For some big projects, Kinderhilfe has received funding from Sternstunden – a benefit programme run by the Bavarian Broadcasting Corporation, the Irma Pfeifer Foundation, and the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

- OTHER NGOs THAT HELP CHILDREN

Some smaller German NGOs committed to the support of children in Namibia in respect of similar projects include LionKids Namibia eV, Deutsch-Namibischer Partnerschaftsverein eV, Namibiakids eV, and Fahrräder für Afrika eV/Bicycles for Africa, which cooperates closely with the Bicycle Empowering Network (BEN) Namibia. BEN Namibia aims to empower disadvantaged Namibians through provision of sustainable transport and bicycle-related income generation opportunities.

Support Ulm eV

Support Ulm eV is a non-profit organisation whose goal is support of a medical nature. The organisation was founded in 2005 by voluntary citizens in various occupations of the town of Ulm in Germany. Examples of projects they support are the Otavi Health Clinic, the Albino Corner, several anti-AIDS campaigns, and a medical station to provide medical assistance in the Otavi area.

The Namibian response to NGO assistance

On the Namibian side, the NGO desk in the National Planning Commission (NPC) and NANGOF, the Namibian NGO Forum, need to be strengthened in their liaison with international NGOs, specifically German NGOs. They need to undertake properly focused and well-coordinated approaches to channelling donor assistance to needy communities in Namibia.

Other important factors that influence bilateral relations

Other factors that should be looked at while reviewing the bilateral relations between Namibia and Germany are the two countries' mutual membership of certain groupings. For instance, on the UN front, both Namibia and Germany call for the world body to undergo major reform. However, it should be noted that actions by one country through other membership groupings can have an impact on the other country. Similarly, whereas it is accepted that Namibian–German bilateral relations were built on shared values, it is nevertheless expected that these relations can face particular challenges from time to time. In the late 1990s, for instance, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo faced an imminent danger of collapsing after it had been attacked by external forces. In the light of this situation, the leadership of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which included Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe, combined their

forces and played a decisive role in helping to prevent President Desiré Laurent Kabila's government from falling during that critical time. However, the military intervention by these three SADC countries did not go down well with some of Namibia's development partners, including Germany. This development directly affected German official development assistance to Namibia, which was reduced during the period in question. Nevertheless, relations were later salvaged.

Furthermore, the relations between the African continent and the EU have undergone significant changes in recent years. African–EU relations are transforming from a partnership relating to the Cotonou Agreement to the Lisbon Treaty. This has produced a great deal of uncertainty among the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. On the trade front, the greatest concern being expressed by ACP countries, including Namibia, has revolved around EPAs with the EU. Negotiations concerning the EPAs have so far not produced agreements acceptable to Namibia and some other countries. As a publication from the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) points out, –³⁵

[t]he EPA negotiation process has placed a heavy burden on the EU–Africa relationship, and it has also put pressure on the inner coherence of the ACP.

Another issue that has placed a burden on Namibian–German relations is the implementation of the Schengen visa regime by the EU. This development has placed Germany in a position where they do not reciprocate Namibia's granting of a 'no visa' requirement to German citizens visiting the country. However, the German Government has now exempted Namibian diplomatic passport holders from requiring visas to enter Germany.

Dealing with the pain of the past

Just as Namibia's foreign policy has been shaped by its past and by the liberation struggle, it could also be argued that the foreign policy of the Federal Republic of Germany has its origin in the foreign policy of West Germany. Ultimately, Germany's current foreign policy can be traced to a number of steps taken within the former West Germany's foreign policy.³⁶ Maull, one of the renowned commentators on German foreign policy, has elaborated on this aspect, explaining that the country wants –³⁷

... to be perceived as a reliable ally and a fair partner, and it rests importantly on leadership by example.

35 See various ECDPM publications on the EPAs, as well as Katjavivi (2012).

36 Maull (2011:148–161).

37 (ibid.).

Furthermore, Maull, in a 2011 article on globalisation and German foreign policy, asks how the policy should position itself.³⁸ He suggests several guidelines that would serve Germany well, summing these up as the task of steering the country along a course that would maintain and enhance public welfare in a sustainable way, to benefit not only the society at home, but also in the rest of the world. Maull constantly refers to the world going through a number of difficult foreign policy challenges, including crises that affect international relations in general, and, in particular, the North–South collaboration.³⁹

Judt and Snyder have it that, until recently, it was not fashionable in Germany to try to promote the concept of caring for the needy for the purpose of promoting equity within societies.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the authors claim, until recently, it was not politically fashionable to discuss and emphasise suffering within German societies, including the suffering of German citizens during the Allied Forces' bombings in World War II, because this would reignite the debate of National Socialist German atrocities against others, and would probably relativise Germany's crimes vis-à-vis atrocities by others against Germans.⁴¹ This thinking has continued to shape the entire political debate on addressing war and colonial atrocities in some sections of German society and, to a larger extent, all former imperial powers to date. It is easier to try to brush facts related to colonial oppression under the carpet than to face and appropriately address them.

Despite this, however, there has been a re-examination of the past:⁴²

Today, Germans and others engage their past in terms closely comparable to those familiar to us from historiography elsewhere. Since this shift in perspective occurred in exactly the decade when victimhood was taking centre stage in historical and political debates across the West, we should not be surprised that questions of comparative suffering, apology and commemoration – familiar from American identity politics to the South African truth commissions – have their place in German conversations as well.

According to Frank Chikane, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was perceived as “a historic task”.⁴³ And according to Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the South African TRC was regarded as the most ambitious, “a kind of benchmark against which the rest are measured”.⁴⁴ Material compensation is, as Tötemeyer points out, a component of restorative justice for atrocities committed in the past.⁴⁵

38 (ibid.).

39 (ibid.).

40 Judt & Snyder (2012).

41 (ibid.:44–45).

42 (ibid.).

43 Chikane (2013:305).

44 (ibid.:306).

45 Tötemeyer (2013:80).

Despite the warm relations that have developed between the Namibian and German Governments since 1990, there has been a continuous wave of demands for dialogue over the bloody conflict that characterised the history of both countries. For this reason, the affected Namibian communities believe successive German Governments have not addressed the painful realities of the genocide. This has led them to petition the German authorities through various forums to have their grievances heard. These communities have also resorted to taking the German Government to court in the United States of America. The court case in the USA ended inconclusively, but other form of actions continued, including the motion on reparations introduced in the Namibian National Assembly and unanimously adopted in October 2005.

I have written elsewhere about the plight of the Namibian people under German colonial rule:⁴⁶

The ordeal suffered by Namibians during this period is well captured in the Blue Book of 1918, produced by the British Government. In 2003, Dr Zephania Kameeta, Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Namibia, has written a preface for the re-published version of the Blue Book, saying that the book reveals “one long nightmare of suffering, bloodshed, tears, humiliation and death”.

It is indeed a sensitive and emotional issue for us in Namibia. As the title of the re-published Blue Book states, ‘words cannot be found’ to fully describe how people felt about their suffering. In an interview, the South African Judge and international war crime prosecutor Richard J Goldstone once said:⁴⁷

It really is a natural cry in every human being on every continent: when you've been victimized, you want justice. ... where those cries are unheeded, that causes cycles of violence, cycles of unhappiness ... There is this anger that builds up from generation to generation.

We are therefore reminded that, in order to heal the wounds of the past, it is essential to implement a process of justice or reach out to the victims. It is also important for us to take note of the work done by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in its efforts “to establish a material and moral basis for the crusade for reparations”. Both Prof. Ali Mazrui⁴⁸ and Ambassador Dudley Thompson⁴⁹ have made powerful statements of encouragement in respect of establishing –

... Regional Committees on reparations in all regions of the world, in which Africans and people of African descent are to be found.

46 Katjavivi (2008:91).

47 (ibid.).

48 Mazrui (1993:58–72).

49 Thompson (1993:21–27).

The Minister's apology

It is important to appreciate the courageous apology in the words of the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses", made by Ms Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, then German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, during her visit to Namibia to mark the August 2004 Centennial Remembrance of the atrocities committed by the German colonial troops in Namibia. This event was held near Okakarara, not far from where some of the most bloody battles had taken place.

In the eyes of many observers, as I have written elsewhere, this was –

... an apology that is rooted in acknowledging the historic injustice and human damages that were caused. Dr Theo-Ben Gurirab, who was the Prime Minister of Namibia at that time, later pointed out that "those words reverberated across the entire country, and our people said 'Yes, at long last.'"

I went further and quoted Judge Goldstone:⁵⁰

The public and official exposure of truth ... is itself an important form of justice ... Common to all forms of justice is public acknowledgement for the victims. I witnessed time and again in South Africa, Bosnia and Rwanda the importance of that acknowledgement to victims. It is frequently the beginning of their healing process.

Thus, the affected Namibian communities are still of the opinion that an apology can only be the first step towards serving justice in this particular matter. Since the adoption of the motion in the National Assembly in 2005, the affected communities have embarked on a constant consultation process with the Namibian Government, which in turn has taken on a facilitation role. It is in this context that, in December 2007, Prime Minister Nahas Angula, on behalf of the Namibian Government, transmitted the unanimously adopted resolution in support of the claims for reparations to Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier, then Foreign Minister and Deputy Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany for consideration of the matter. However, the German authorities indicated that the Namibian Government had not stated its own position and, therefore, it was not a government-to-government matter. Since then, however, the Namibian President has formally taken up the issue with the German authorities.

The Namibian–German Special Initiative Programme

Minister Wieczorek-Zeul's visit to Namibia in 2004 was followed by the introduction of the Namibian–German Special Initiative Programme (NGSIP), with a pledge of a €20-million grant from the German Government. However, we are told that the project

50 Katjavivi (2008:91).

originally had a different name. Minister Wieczorek-Zeul reportedly spoke in Dusseldorf in 2005, having –⁵¹

... presented what she called a Reconciliation Initiative: development aid amounting to 20 million euro for the descendants of the population groups affected by the genocide in Namibia.

The aid was to be spent on community-based projects in those communities in central and southern Namibia – the Herero, Nama and Damara – who were affected by the genocide.

The German Government decision to provide €20 million was initially regarded by many observers as having been unilateral on their part. However, the initiative was followed up, presented and discussed between the two governments. In this connection, President Pohamba was approached by the German authorities during his state visit to Germany in 2005, and presented with a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the Special Initiative project. It was reported that this move took the Namibian President by surprise. For this reason, he declined to sign the said document at the time, and suggested that further consultations were needed.

After having consulted with all necessary stakeholders, President Pohamba appointed Deputy Prime Minister Dr Libertina Amathila to consult the traditional leaders of the affected communities. Accordingly, Dr Amathila produced a report which eventually formed the basis for the implementation of the NGSIP. The process to undertake this task took a long time. This was due to various logistic constraints and the necessary consultations that had taken place between Namibian and German authorities. For these reasons, the actual implementation only took place in November 2007. The Namibian Government's implementing agency was the National Planning Commission (NPC).⁵²

It must be acknowledged, however, that the various traditional leaders were displeased with the manner in which projects were being implemented. They had complained repeatedly about the lack of transparency and poor coordination with the would-be beneficiaries. This challenge faced the staff of the NPC, and the reigning mood when the author became the Director-General of the NPC in 2008 was despondent. In the light of the complaints by traditional leaders, the Namibian and German authorities stepped up their efforts to deal with the specific points that had been raised. Firstly, the relevant implementation committee structures were reorganised and additional people with appropriate expertise were appointed. Secondly, it became essential to appoint a new coordinator for the programme. These changes assisted the programme's implementation process, and made it more accountable to stakeholders.

51 (ibid.).

52 See debates in the Namibia National Assembly, 17 February–12 March 2009, in Parliament of the Republic of Namibia (2009:300).

The grant of €20 million pledged by Minister Wieczorek-Zeul unleashed a torrent of debate and confusion which had to be managed by both governments, who explained that the NGSIP was not a reparations programme *per se*. From the Namibian side, this assistance was applied to benefit all people in the targeted regions in order not to cause ethnic division or tension. Indeed, the Namibian Government's take on the issue is to develop infrastructure that benefits the wider community within the identified regions. German authorities had to regularly clarify to Namibian authorities that this funding was not for reparations. Due to different interpretations and expectations of what the NGSIP was intended to deliver, it has received extensive media coverage and attention both in Namibia and in Germany.

The NGSIP is quite unique. Despite the complaints, it is one of the few programmes where communities have had the opportunity to identify their needs and projects directly. Consultations were held with regional councillors, the various traditional leaders, constituencies, and with central ministries in order to have a coordinated approach and to integrate the programme within Namibia's structures and institutions as far as possible. This was done to make use of local capacities to implement and sustain the relevant projects in the future.

However, the implementation of the NGSIP has been very slow for a number of reasons. Some of these reasons were lengthy and bureaucratic procedures on both sides, protracted community consultations, and the reviewing of priority needs. Indeed, implementation is still under way. The serious delays experienced have triggered renewed attention on the NGSIP as well as renewed calls for reparations.⁵³ This led to a number of visits from Germany to Namibia, notably by Ambassador Walter Lindner. The last time he came, in February 2012, was in order to see what the problems were in terms of the NGSIP and how its implementation could be accelerated. During these discussions, the NPC sensitised the Ambassador and the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development about the need for additional funding for the NGSIP in order to honour the original commitments Germany made to the relevant communities in Namibia. This was necessary because the NGSIP had experienced a shortfall following the implementation delays, which had not been foreseen: no price escalation or inflation index had been included in the budget. It is understood that, furthermore, the 2007 Feasibility Report produced by Namibia's NPC had underestimated the design and supervision consultancy costs, and had made no budgetary provision for capacity-building to support beneficiaries to obtain maximum and sustainable benefits from project investments. As a result, the total funds required to fund the original projects were 70% above the 2007 budget. The NPC officially approached the German Government in March 2012 and requested additional funding amounting to N\$104 million, being the NGSIP investment cost to implement the projects originally agreed with the communities concerned. Germany responded positively to this request, and granted the additional funds.

53 NPC (2013).

It may be fair to say that the NGSIP drew attention to more serious and unresolved matters, such as the reparations issue and, as such, escalated the urgency to try to deal with them. It is important for Germany – but also for Namibia – to ensure that the NGSIP works. Some believe that the NGSIP has the potential to assist the communities affected, and that a number of useful lessons can be drawn from how this programme was prepared and is implemented.

Many people in both Namibia and Germany regarded a description of the ‘reconciliation initiative’ to be more appropriate than the ‘Special Initiative’ label when viewed against the issue of genocide that had moved Minister Wieczorek-Zeul to tears when she addressed the 2004 event at Okakarara. No wonder her preferred words were those of a “reconciliation initiative”.⁵⁴ This explains her symbolic gesture of goodwill, expressed in the form of €20 million towards those she regarded as victims of bloody colonial war. It appears that Minister Wieczorek-Zeul perhaps did not win the game of words regarding the finalisation of the NGSIP, but she certainly won the hearts of many Namibians for her courage to stand before them and say, “We are sorry for what we did here!” Even more remarkable is that she represented the same political tradition of those German parliamentarians who had been opposed to colonial wars in Namibia at the turn of the 20th Century.⁵⁵ However, this framing of the NGSIP as a reconciliation initiative was not acceptable to the German authorities overall. This is not surprising, given the German Government’s sensitivity when it came to its history in Namibia, including the issue relating to the demand for reparations.

This subject was further emphasised by the Speaker of the Namibian National Assembly, Dr Theo-Ben Gurirab, during his visit to Germany in July 2007 as the head of an all-party delegation of MPs invited by Bundestag President Dr Norbert Lammert.⁵⁶ While in Germany, Dr Gurirab and his delegation had the opportunity to exchange views with their German counterparts on a number of issues, including the question of reparations. Equally, German MPs were interested in seeking the views of their Namibian counterparts with regard to the motion adopted by the Namibian National Assembly to ascertain whether that was the majority view. In that respect, it could be said that both the Namibian and German MPs were interested in having a structured form of dialogue, dealing with matters of mutual interest – including the said motion. This willingness was observed on both sides, as was their readiness to engage in dialogue that aimed at finding a lasting solution to the Namibian–German conflict of the past. There is no doubt that such a move should be encouraged and supported both in Namibia and in Germany. Ideally, such an initiative might hold promise for a better understanding of each other’s

54 Refer to the inception of the NGSIP.

55 For the duration of the period 1904–1908, the precursor of the SPD was the opposition party in the Bundestag, and it had pronounced itself against the German colonial wars in Africa.

56 This meeting marked a greatly renewed interest in Namibian–German relations. For more detail, see *Parliament Journal*, 6(1), January–April 2008.

positions as well as contributing towards the strengthening of the Namibian–German relations. Dr Gurirab spoke on the possible way forward in optimistic terms, but also sounded a word of caution.⁵⁷

My own view is that all tracks should be kept open and an all-inclusive dialogue, which seeks consensus and satisfactory outcome, must guide all the parties concerned. But a dialogue, while avoiding a rush, must, however, be time-bound. A dialogue which does not find a lasting solution would unhappily be a waste of time. By default, that would yet again end up as a betrayal of trust. Neither the German Government nor the Namibian Government can stand up in the face of such an indictment. I know that we can and we want to do better to close this ominous chapter of the brutal colonial history.

If we look at the relations and cooperation – historically, politically, economically and culturally – between the two countries, it is evident that both sides have more to lose than to gain if these issues are not resolved. In this respect it has also become clear that the amount of ODA given by Germany, albeit high, and the NGSIP should be viewed separately and cannot act as a substitute for dealing with the real issues at hand.

The repatriation of human remains

During my time as Namibia’s Ambassador to Berlin, word got to me that several skulls of Namibian ancestors who had been victims of German atrocities were being kept in medical and other research institutions in Germany, having been taken there in the early 20th Century to facilitate an unfounded anthropological research theory which assumed that black Africans were inferior to persons of European descent. I then initiated talks on the need to have these human remains returned to their homeland. The German and Namibian Governments engaged in detailed talks on the subject, leading to the first return of 20 skulls of Herero and Nama ancestors, in October 2011.

However, the return of these remains was not as smooth as had been expected. The Namibian Government had sent a high-level delegation to Germany, comprising traditional leaders of the affected communities, led by Hon. Kazenambo Kazenambo, Namibia’s Minister of Youth, National Service, Sport and Culture. The German side was represented by a lower-ranking Minister, Cornelia Pieper, who was then Minister of State in the German Foreign Office. In terms of protocol, the Namibian Government viewed the German Government’s decision to send a Minister of State instead of a full Cabinet Minister to represent them as an attempt to downgrade the event and an apparent denial of responsibility for the actions of the German colonial occupation forces. Certainly, the lukewarm approach on the part of the German authorities to the entire subject of the return of the human remains cast serious doubt on the sincerity of the German Government about the subject of reconciliation. Initially, the German authorities preferred to use the term *regret* rather than *apologise* to refer to the genocide actions of

57 Katjavivi (2008:91).

their occupation forces at the time. As illustrated by Yonas Endrias, the spokesperson of the German NGO Alliance, –⁵⁸

[t]he German Government uses the term regret instead of apologize. One regrets a minor crime, but genocide is the worst of all crimes, a crime against humanity.

Minister Kazenambo urged Germany to embrace openness in their future dealings with Namibian communities. Furthermore, on the occasion of the requiem mass held in Windhoek for the fallen souls to whom the skulls belonged, Namibian President Pohamba said the following:⁵⁹

We will continue to work with the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany to strengthen the ties of bilateral cooperation on the basis of mutual respect and mutual benefit of our two peoples. We also trust that our two countries will continue working together to complete the repatriation of the remains that are still in Germany.

At Namibia's national commemoration for the 20 Namibian skulls returned from Germany, German Ambassador to Namibia at the time, HE Egon Kochanke, said –⁶⁰

... the return of the skulls reminds us of a dark chapter in history, which still causes tremendous grief.

In his own words, he said:⁶¹

Allow me to mourn with you and to bow my head in deep regret.

Notably, there are still more human skulls of Namibian ancestors in Germany that are yet to be returned to their motherland. The first shipment of skulls returned from the Charité Hospital in the Berlin Medical Historical Museum comprised 20 skulls, i.e. 11 from Nama and 9 from *Ovaherero* communities. There are several other skulls still housed at the Freiburg University research facility.

Notably, although Minister Pieper acknowledged that Germany accepted its heavy moral and historical responsibility towards Namibia she left the venue before hearing the statement by the Namibian Minister who had led the Namibia delegation. This was perceived by the Namibian delegation as a show of disrespect.

Ambassador Kochanke, while speaking at the signing of a N\$660-million cooperation and financing agreement between his government and Namibia in 2011, soon after the

58 *Namibia Review*, 19(4), Sept/Oct 2011:9.

59 (ibid.:10–11).

60 “Namibian skulls’ return prompts new demands”, *The Local*, German Television News in English, broadcast. 6 October 2011, 06:40 CET.

61 (ibid.).

return of the Namibian skulls, described it as a “sensitive topic”, which had had a negative influence on bilateral relations between the two countries.⁶²

In an effort to cool or defuse the tensions that had developed around the issue of the skulls in particular, the German Government dispatched Ambassador Walter Lindner, Director-General for African Affairs in the German Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to Namibia towards the end of January 2012. The purpose of Lindner’s visit was to meet Namibian stakeholders who included the Prime Minister, MPs,⁶³ and traditional leaders from the affected communities, on the main issues below:

- Strengthening of bilateral cooperation between Namibia and Germany
- Identifying the obstacles and challenges in implementing the NGSIP with a view to managing these challenges, and
- Addressing issues relating to the repatriation of the other existing human remains from Germany to Namibia.

In terms of civil society, more than 100 German NGOs have signed a “No Amnesty to Genocide” appeal to the German Parliament, joining the demand for a formal apology for the genocide and reparations. The alliance demands a prompt, official apology from the Bundestag itself, as well as the initiation of a “respectful dialogue” with the communities concerned in Namibia as regards “symbolic and material reparations”. In addition, the alliance has called for the establishment of a German foundation that would dedicate itself to the “critical” reappraisal of German history, with a particular focus on colonialism and the genocide committed in Namibia.

The way forward

What is the way forward in Namibian–German relations? As I have indicated before, these bilateral relations have gone through their ups and downs, but, as we have learnt, the relationship is one that is built on common interests.

It is important to continue to emphasise Namibia’s high potential to Germany and other parts of the world in respect of being an investment destination. In recognition of this important role, the Namibian Government should ensure that appropriate ministries and institutions intensify and, where necessary, revise and refine existing strategies with a view to broadening the landscape that would continue its drive to bring in the private sector and civil society role players. This could be done through constantly emphasising Namibia’s national vision – Vision 2030 and its five-year National Development Plans

62 “Collectors of skulls had hidden agenda – German Ambassador”, *The Namibian*, 17 November 2011. For further details on the significance of the repatriation of Namibian human skulls, see Katjavivi (2011).

63 The author, speaking on behalf of Namibian MPs, briefed Ambassador Lindner on 2 February 2012 on the subject in a Windhoek meeting.

– on the basis of a well-built system of coordination and structures linked to an efficient evaluation mechanism. For example, before the NGSIP can be utilised as a platform for a larger strategy to solve the needs of Namibia's needy communities, it should be evaluated in its entirety so as to take into account the lessons learnt, challenges met, and further opportunities that have accrued through its very existence.

Namibia should also utilise its parliamentary and other strategic partnerships to continue to speak out on issues it considers to be of a strategic nature, including the needs and expectations of the people of Namibia. For instance, Namibia faces particular challenges with regard to the impact of climate change on its fragile ecosystems. In this connection, Namibia could make a strong and compelling argument to its international development partners, including Germany, by emphasising the direct connection between healthy ecosystems and securing food and fresh water, a healthy economy, and healthy people. Knowing the Federal Republic of Germany's interest and commitment towards environmental challenges in general and to climate change in particular, Namibia might have a win-win situation on that score!

From everything that we have observed in the above discussion or have known beyond it with regard to relations between the two countries, it is clear that both Namibia and Germany have managed to maintain mutually beneficial ties over the years. However, there is unfinished business. Namibians still regard Germany's apology for the genocide as partial: one that can only be complete if accompanied by meaningful compensation for the wrongs committed in the past,⁶⁴ and aimed at bettering the livelihood of the communities originally affected, as part of the process of healing the wounds. Notably, to date, Germany has ruled out reparation and maintains that its €600 million in development aid since Namibia's Independence has been “for the benefit of all Namibians”.⁶⁵

How can Germany deal with the past in relation to Namibia? For this to happen successfully, both the Namibian and German Governments and their respective national Parliaments need to promote dialogue at the appropriate levels of society. It is worth noting that both the Namibian President and his counterpart, the German Chancellor, have begun engaging each other on these issues through direct communication between Windhoek and Berlin. The Namibian–German Parliamentary Friendship Group was encouraged during its visit to Germany in March 2013 to hear that the German–SADC Parliamentary Friendship Group had embraced the concept of engagement through dialogue to deal with the unresolved issues between Germany and Namibia, within the German Parliament. All parties represented within the Bundestag have agreed to address these issues. What is now required is a well-structured dialogue with a given time frame.

64 For details, see Olusoga & Erichsen (2010); Sarkin (2011).

65 “Namibian skulls’ return prompts new demands”, *The Local*, German Television News in English, broadcast. 6 October 2011, 06:40 CET.

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