



**WOMEN'S ACTION FOR DEVELOPMENT
(Incorporated Association Not For Gain)**

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**REMARKS BY SALATIEL SHINEDIMA - WAD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DESIGNATE
DURING A MEDIA BRIEFING TO ANNOUNCE HER RETIREMENT
THURSDAY, 21ST AUGUST 2014**

Ms Kadhikwa; Ms Veronica De Klerk; Members of the Media:

I wish to first of all welcome and thank the media for continuously demonstrating their interest and support in attending WAD's media briefings, workshops and field days. I also wish to thank you for your eagerness to carry out WAD's development programs to all corners of the country.

Ladies and gentlemen, as it has been mentioned earlier, we have called this media briefing to officially announce the retirement of WAD's Executive Director, Ms Veronica De Klerk, who has been at the helm of the organization for the past 20 Years and to announce my appointment as the Executive Director designate as from the 01 September 2014. The management members and regional representatives of WAD wish to extend their sincere gratitude and appreciation to Ms De Klerk for steering the organization from its humble beginnings 20 years ago to a reputable and well respected NGO in the country today. In the past 20 years,

we have seen WAD growing from strength to strength, and the organization, under the leadership of Ms De Klerk, has managed to attract the interest of local and international donors. Her unwavering contribution to community development and women's empowerment is a remarkable one in our country. She is a patriotic and selfless leader, who has dedicated her life to the wellbeing of her fellow Namibians, sometimes at the expense of her own wellbeing. Leaders of her caliber are rare to find these days and I believe that many Namibians will agree with me that she is a true Namibian champion of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Ladies and gentlemen, with that being said, this official announcement comes at a time when our country is grasped with disturbing media reports of gender based violence, rape, baby dumping, intimate partner homicide and many other social evils that prevails in our society. If one takes into consideration that the media continuously carry reports of passion killing, rape and Gender Based Violence, where men are the prime culprits, one can clearly see that some men are evidently unwilling to heed the call made by the nation to stop these evil acts.

It is sadly those men, who are tarnishing the good image of men in general in this country. It is because of those men, that the rest of us have to suffer this embarrassing evil image of violence in society.

Ladies and gentlemen, the questions that we need to ask ourselves are: How long are we going to tolerate the brutal killing of our mothers, daughters and sisters by insecure men who cannot accept rejection? How long are we going to allow the brutal rape of our sisters and daughters by men who abuse their God given

gift of physical strength to violate the rights of the vulnerable sectors of our society?

Ladies and Gentlemen: The actions of men who commit gender violence is such a disgrace to the male gender that we bow our heads in shame. We, as a new WAD team, will not be disheartened by such cowardice, but to resolutely work towards its eradication.

Our strategy will be to put much effort into the new generation of men, to grow up to become real men, who can take disappointments and rejection on the chin, and to bravely walk away from provocation that can lead to gender based violence. It is a character trait of a strong man not to bow down to revenge on a partner who does not equal his physical strength. It is the weakling who seizes the opportunity whenever provoked to brutalize a woman in order to boost his ego!

Dear fellow men, the time to say enough is enough is long overdue. The time to change these violent attitudes towards women is today. Let us stand united in the fight against gender based violence. Let us spearhead the campaign against violence against women and children and educate each other on how best we can solve relationship problems. Let us play our functional role as husbands, boyfriends, fathers and friends. A life lost due to GBV is one too many.

Further to the afore going, we need to ask ourselves: How do we create a pool of men who are interested in the advancement of women to honor them and to respect them as honorable human beings? How do we inspire men to fight for the

plight of women – because the fact remains that the majority of crimes committed against women are committed by men who are labelled as the main culprits? How can we effectively involve men in the mainstream of activities that are aimed at addressing the problem of Gender Based Violence?

Ladies and gentlemen, the degree of violence against women and girls has escalated so profoundly that it has become an enemy of any progress that we hope to achieve as a nation. If one takes into consideration that countless voices, including that of the incumbent President as well as that of the Founding President, religious groups etc are calling for this abnormality of violence against women and girls to be stopped, and yet it simply escalates, it is fair to conclude that we are not doing enough.

Dear fellow citizens, the struggle for gender equality continues to be a daily struggle for Namibian women. Even though the country has recorded some encouraging results in some sectors, women are still under-represented in decision-making positions. WAD believes that the 50/50 representation of both men and women is the greatest equalizer to gender disparity in decision making positions. Please allow me to once again congratulate the ruling party for instituting a 50/50 zebra system in its Party lists. This is in line with the commitment Namibia made during the signing of the SADC gender protocol and in accordance with the strategies set forth in our National Gender Policy (2010 – 2020).

Ladies and gentlemen, I believe that without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspectives at all levels of decision making, the goals of equality, freedom, justice, development and peace cannot be achieved. Therefore I urge all political parties to implement the 50/50 system and ensure that women enjoy an equal representation in all senior positions of their parties.

I also appeal to the private sector to emulate the example set by the ruling party and ensure that women are equally represented in the top structures of their companies or institutions.

As far as alcohol and drug abuse are concerned, it is disheartening to observe that our youth are gradually becoming slaves of these substances. As it was mentioned earlier by Ms De Klerk, the uncontrolled availability of alcohol reflects a disease within the community which will soon cause its self destruction.

Ladies and gentlemen, as we all are fully aware, alcohol abuse is a major contributor to gender based violence and traffic accidents in the country. It takes away the most valuable actors in our economy and has the potential of reversing our developmental achievements. WAD, is therefore willing and able to assist government in creating awareness and educating people on the negative impacts of alcohol abuse.

In conclusion: I wish to assure our development partners, local and international donors, government ministries, the private sector and the nation at large that WAD will continue working towards the realization of gender equality.

My team and I will continue complementing the work of government in its efforts to eradicate poverty and reduce unemployment in the country. And for us to achieve all this, we will need your support as you have always done.

I further wish to assure the nation that WAD will remain a relevant force in the fields of gender equality and community development, as long as inequality, unemployment and poverty prevail in our society.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the WAD Board of Directors for the trust which they have bestowed in me to lead WAD and to advance women's status in society. I wish to assure the Board and the nation that I have the necessary energy, the commitment, the passion and the drive to do what is expected of me. I mean serious business to realize my dream, to cultivate more male role models in the country who would respect women, honour them and treat them with dignity. We shall stay focused on this goal and not look back!

My team and I, will further use the opportunity afforded to us to engage more men in addressing gender inequality. We strongly believe that if we involve more men in our programs, we will be able to reduce incidents of violence against women. We shall continue where my predecessor left off, and we shall follow her footsteps to achieve our goals.

As for Ms De Klerk, I would just like to say thank you once again for laying the foundation for us. We shall make you proud, we shall continue laying the bricks and believe, that one day we shall complete this building.

I thank you