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**STATEMENT BY HONOURABLE DR. PEYA MUSHELENGA, MP
MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY
ON THE OCCASION OF THE JOINT LAUNCH OF THE NATIONHOOD
AND NATIONAL PRIDE PROGRAMME'S GENDER BASED VIOLENCE
(GBV) MASS MEDIA CAMPAIGN**

Honourable Doreen Sioka, Minister of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare;

Honourable Agnes Tjongarero, Minister of Sport, Youth and National Service;

Executive Directors and Senior Government officials present;

Members of the media;

Fellow Namibians and Stakeholders watching;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Over the past months, our country has witnessed increasing and deeply traumatising acts of violence perpetrated mostly against women and children. The Government of the Republic of Namibia views these acts of gender based violence with great concern as they have remained an immediate challenge to our core societal values and thus affecting our nationhood and national pride. Our women and children no longer feel safe in their homes, localities and the entire land of their birth. This is not who we are and we shall not allow this to be the norm and the future we leave for our children.

As we approach a period where majority of couples and lovers will be celebrating Valentine's Day, a day associated with loving and caring, the three Ministries and other stakeholders deemed it fit to launch this mass media campaign in order to create awareness on Gender-Based Violence (GBV), sexual harassment and sexual violence. We want to strategically position the issue of Gender-Based Violence at the centre of the public discourse in order to encourage our citizens particularly men and boys to start having conversations on possible solutions.

Director of Ceremonies

Gender-based violence has adverse effect on victims and children too. Australian and Ethiopian academics reveal in their studies titled "Gender-based violence among female youths in educational institutions of Sub-Saharan Africa: a systematic review and meta-analysis"¹ that children who witness gender-violence at home become violent,

¹ Beyene A. S. et al. 2019, Gender-based violence among female youths in educational institutions of Sub-Saharan Africa: a systematic review and meta-analysis, in *Systematic Reviews*, (8) 59.

alcoholic, suicidal and have poor performance at school.

Gender-based violence symbolises barbarism and backwardness. Even in the animal kingdom, one does not observe gender-based violence. For example, male dogs do not fight female dogs, bulls do not fight cows and billies do not fight nannies. If animals from one gender can observe the dignity of another gender, what is wrong with human species that they indulge into acts below humanness? I recall the then Inspector of Education, who later became the first Governor of Oshikoto Region, Reverend Hosea Nampala telling us at school saying “My children, the behaviour of boys assaulting girls do not exist even among the heathen communities”.

Director of Ceremonies

We will advocate for and work towards a shared understanding of the root causes of GBV in our society by reaching out to parents, community leaders, churches, civil society, schools and youth organizations in an effort to work together to seize the moment and move quickly so that the momentum is not lost.

As we have done before in times of great difficulty and strife, this is the time to unite and confront GBV directly by speaking to our fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters to be ambassadors of the change we want to see. The idea is to speak to the psyche of would be perpetrators that violence is not the solution, neither should it be part of human behaviour.

We shall work together with our stakeholders and media partners to organize focus group discussions, debates and try to find community based solutions to GBV. We shall also jointly strengthen and capacitate regional GBV and human rights clusters to be able to play an effective role in addressing GBV.

We all know that we have to do much more to respond to the cries for justice by women and children who have suffered violence. We have to do much more to end these horrible abuses and the impunity that allows these human rights violations to continue. When it comes to the prosecution of offenders, we know that ending impunity means that laws must be enforced. Women must have access to the police to file a criminal

report and receive legal advice and protection orders. The response to violence must be immediate, coordinated and effective so that crimes are punished and justice is secured.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is of necessity that every community member makes it their business to be peace makers and report GBV in their neighbourhoods.

Director of Ceremonies

The Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, through the Nationhood and National Pride programme, will continue to engage civil society and the private sector to end GBV, working with survivors to empower them, making sure their experiences are taken into consideration during the development of appropriate intervention; and working with those who suffer multiple and intersecting forms of violence and are particularly vulnerable to ensure that they have access to help.

As a means to complement the efforts made by the Minister of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare, together with the Ministry Sport, Youth and National Service, we agreed to jointly launch the Nationhood and National Pride Gender Based Violence Mass Media Campaign. The campaign which is aimed at promoting behavioural change is targeted mainly towards male and female between the ages of 18 and 55 years old and will be rolled out through the various media agencies, digital and social media platforms.

Ladies and Gentleman, I think we can all agree that the time for complacency is long gone and belongs to another era. The silence on violence against women, men and children, has been broken and now is the time for stronger behavioural change intervention.

I hereby declare the Nationhood and National Pride Gender Based Violence Mass Media campaign launched and urge you to ‘Speak Out against Gender Based Violence in Namibia’.

United we stand against Gender Based Violence in Namibia.

My Namibia, My Country, My Pride!