

Speech

by

H.E. Egon Kochanke

Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany,

to introduce the topic

“The German Unification and its impact on Africa and Namibia”

organized by the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation

on 4th November 2010 at the Goethe Zentrum in Windhoek, Namibia

Master of Ceremonies
Hon Prof. Hornhues, President of the German Africa Foundation
Hon Prof. Diescho, University of South Africa, Pretoria
Dr. Bösl, Director of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation Namibia
Mr. Hofmann, President of NADS
Invited guests
Members of the media
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen !

Only a year ago I attended here at the Goethe Zentrum a discussion on “20 years of Falling of the Berlin Wall and its impact on Namibia”. Among the panelists were for instance the late Hans-Erik Staby, Nora Schimming-Chase and Prof. Hornhues. Now, twelve months later we meet to discuss a similar topic. Does this mean that Dr. Bösl, whom I would like to thank for organizing this event - and KAS took it easy by copying the programme of 2009 ?

Definitely not: It shows perfectly how little time a year is, that it took even less than 12 months in 1989/1990 to react to the fall of the wall and come up with a result which we

Germans celebrate every 3rd October as “Day of German Unity”. An outcome nobody could foresee during the night of 9th November, 1989. As political observers we all know how long it can take to move a political project. So it is important to stress the time factor.

From 9th November 1989 until 3rd October 1990 – less than eleven months - the two German Governments in East and West worked practically day and night to achieve an economic and social union, to create new Federal States in the East, to hold for the first time free regional elections in the East, to convince through the so-called Two Plus Four Process the four allied powers USA, SU, UK and F to overcome their reservations against a unified Germany and to fully support the new Germany, and in the end, to sign a Treaty on German Unity (31st August 1990) or treaty of accession with the five new Federal States of the former GDR, being the acceding territory.

I was lucky to serve at that time in Bonn and to witness some of the German-German negotiations. And it still is a miracle how fast time flew.

1990 meant a crucial turning point in many ways and it was not just limited to Germany. 1990 was also the year of Namibian independence and Namibians worked also as hard to hold elections, to write a constitution and finally to celebrate the 21st March.

Even though these two events did not directly condition each other, they were both the issue of the same process: the easing of tensions between East and West, which concluded in the end of the cold war.

Before the fall of the Berlin wall many changes took place: In the Soviet Union Glasnost and Perestroika became a political programme. The thaw in East-West relations led to a liberalization in Eastern Europe. It was also the result of Solidarnosz and even a Polish Pope. All this meant the end of a century of war, horror and mutual threats. The ice had melted.

Long before Germans saw any indications of change, change in Namibia was imminent. The long diplomatic struggle to achieve Namibia's independence was coming to an end. The implementations of the United Nations plan for Namibia was under way. As you may be aware, this process officially started at the UN with the implementation of UN Resolution 435, which had been adopted by the UN Security Council in 1978 as the internationally-

agreed decolonisation plan for Namibia. This resolution was initiated by the so called Western "contact group", which included France, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and West Germany. As the Federal Republic of Germany felt particularly committed to the Namibian cause, it was its main contribution to keep Resolution 435 on the agenda, while negotiations were stuck in the mid-eighties.

German re-unification and Namibian independence were not intertwined in a direct way but events in Germany were not without repercussions on Namibia. The fall of the Berlin wall at the 9th November, 1989 took almost all attention off the international interest in the first "one-person one-vote" elections, which were held from 7th to 11th of November. Even without CNN and BBC these elections were a great success and established the Namibian Constituent Assembly, which became the National Assembly of Namibia upon independence in March 1990.

The unification of both German states was at that time not likely to happen and there was only a small window of opportunity due to the economical and financial grievance in the former Soviet Union. The decision was domestically highly controversial and diplomatically contested by two European partners and former occupying powers, which feared among others a regaining military strength of a reunited Germany.

It is with gratitude that we have to highlight the efforts and commitment of the then Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl, and Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, who were both ever since fervent advocates of a German unification and who pushed strongly in this direction. Being supported by both parliaments - the Bundestag and the first freely elected Volkskammer - (18th March, 1990) and partners in East Germany such as Lothar de Maizière. This decision was brave at that time and disproved all the internal and external critics in only a short period of time.

Parts of the German-Soviet negotiations took actually place at the residence of the German Ambassador here in Windhoek, when Hans-Dietrich Genscher and his Russian counterpart, Eduard Schewardnadse met on the occasion of the celebrations of Namibian independence. It was here were both sides agreed the outline of the 2+4-talks between the four occupying powers and the two Germanys. It is my pride to be in possession of a picture documenting this important meeting.

I am also proud to sit together with Prof. Hornhues, a Member of Parliament at that time who supported Chancellor Kohl and who was instrumental in his party, the CDU, for Germany's support of the Namibian independence process. He was as rapporteur of the Foreign Affairs Committee very much responsible for a joint resolution by the Bundestag regarding German-Namibian relations stressing the special responsibility of the Federal Republic of Germany for an independent Namibia.

After the „Treaty on German Unity“ came into force on the 3rd October, 1990, economic and social reconstruction in Eastern Germany had to be tackled and financed, society had to find new ways, demanding huge efforts from all Germans. But it was worth it. Today, all Germans enjoy democracy, the rule of law and the respect for human rights. We all profit from the benefits of a social market economy and living standards as well as a productivity considerably higher than before. And Germany is benefiting from peace and stability and is surrounded by European friends. However, we all know that a lot has still to be done to create the blooming landscapes.

Similar things can be said about Namibia. The work to overcome many years of apartheid had to start immediately in 1990. Reconciliation overcoming tribalism was and still is important. Creating economic growth and employment, reducing inequalities and eradicating poverty are still the biggest challenges after 20 years of independence.

By its unification Germany also regained full sovereignty and was able to assume responsibility worldwide without being subordinated to restrictions with regard to WW II. United Germany's global influence has grown; it is one of the key players within the European Union, a highly respected negotiating partner and honest broker in international affairs. Pushed by euphoria for the free independent Namibia in my country and committed by the Bundestag resolution the Federal Government got engaged in developing projects immediately in 1990.

Since the final achievements of independence and unification Germany intensified its commitment to the Namibian people and contributed so far with a total of about 6 billion Namibian dollars to the development of post-independent Namibia. Besides contributing financially and technically, my government and political foundations such as KAS have ever since been following and assisting closely the process of democratization, good governance and an independent judiciary in Namibia.

We have learned of the German past, that the existence of democracy is not a matter of course and that having a democratic system on the paper or even in the official name of the country does not imply its existence in the people's daily life – as the experience of the former German – so-called – Democratic Republic shows.

Let us now go back to the issue of today's celebration and reminisce about 20 years of Namibian independence and the achievement of 20 years of German unity. Everyone having predicted Germany such a successful and bright future after two horrible world wars and an inner division, would have been taken for a fool – still back in 1989. Let us all commit to never let occur again, what happened in the last century and strive for a prosperous future – in Germany as well as in Namibia.

I am now looking forward to listen to Professor Joseph Diescho who lived and studied in Hamburg between 1987 and 1988 to give us his reading on the German unification and its impact on Africa and Namibia.

I thank you.