

**STATEMENT BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE PRIME  
MINISTER HAGE G. GEINGOB AT THE OCCASION OF  
THE LAUNCHING OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF  
VOLUNTEERS – 2001**

**12 FEBRUARY 2001**

**WINDHOEK**

**Director of Ceremonies,  
United Nations Resident Coordinator in Namibia, Dr. Jacqui  
Badcock,  
Chairperson of the International Year of Volunteers National  
Committee, Mr. Penda Kiiyale,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen,**

**I am pleased to be here today and to officially launch the  
International Year of Volunteers in Namibia. This global  
salute to volunteers has been duplicated in countries around  
the world to celebrate the spirit of volunteerism and I am  
pleased that Namibia is now joining the international  
community in recognising the important work of volunteers  
within our communities.**

**Volunteerism is a labour of love. Volunteers are willing to give  
time and resources, motivated by the belief in a cause. For  
some, it is out of compassion for the underprivileged; for  
others, it is a commitment to make a difference to the lives of  
others in the community, or a passion to make a difference in  
their area of pursuit.**

**In doing so, they demonstrate the qualities of active citizenship.**

**I should, particularly, like to thank the foreign volunteers doing service in Namibia. Many of them have quietly reached out and played a vital part in improving the lives of others in our community. The volunteers from the Voluntary Service Organisation, Peace Corps and other Volunteer organisations operating in Namibia are but a few examples of the sterling work done by our international volunteer friends. Through their involvement, they have injected a new vigour into our local volunteer scene.**

**I believe that 2001 will be an exciting year ahead for volunteerism. It will not only be a year to celebrate and recognise our volunteers, but it will also be a year for us to draw attention to the many needs in our community. My hope is that the International Year of Volunteers 2001 will be the catalyst to spur our community on to greater voluntary efforts in the coming years. Let the theme "Volunteers for a caring society"" resonate in all of us and bring out in us the volunteer spirit. Let it also be a call to all of us, from all walks of life, from all sectors of society, of all ages and wherewithal, to volunteer generously our time and skills to enrich our society.**

**International Year of Volunteers, which is a yearlong tribute to the many unsung heroes in our community, invites everyone to celebrate volunteerism and the tremendous impact that volunteers service has on our country and all of its communities.**

**Some one once said that "Virtue is its own reward," but I believe volunteers are rewarded many times over for their work. They are rewarded with the knowledge that they have truly made a difference. Their courage and dedication should be an inspiration to others – for all of us – to act.**

**I commend the members of the Namibia National Committee on International Year of Volunteers for giving so generously of their time and talents to this important initiative. You have a tremendous task ahead of you. You will need to reach out to all communities across our nation and to ask these communities to get involved, explain the benefits and recruit volunteers like never before.**

**Furthermore, you are helping to put a well-deserved spotlight on the volunteers and the community groups and organizations that contribute so substantially to the quality of life we enjoy in Namibia. The need for increased volunteer effort is greater today than ever, given the adverse impact of global problems such as environmental degradation, drug abuse or HIV/AIDS on the more vulnerable sectors of society.**

**Volunteer service has been a part of virtually every civilisation and society. I recall how during the struggle for our independence volunteer groups across the world helped mobilising resources for our people in exile. We therefore have more reason to recognise the importance of volunteerism.**

**The premise underlying the International Year of Volunteers 2001 is that voluntary service is called for more than ever before to tackle areas of major concern in the socio-economic, cultural, humanitarian and peace-building fields and that more people are needed to offer their service as volunteers. For this to happen, there is a need for greater recognition and facilitation of volunteer work and greater promotion of such service, drawing upon the best initiatives and efforts – the “best practice”- of volunteers. A further underlying belief is that the global begins with the local: and that economic and social progress is not so much engendered from the top down, but from the locality and the grassroots upward.**

**I, therefore, would like to appeal to all our citizens, businesses, community groups and our leaders at all levels to encourage the spirit of volunteerism and to make meaningful contributions to establishing a strong culture of volunteerism. As concerned Namibians, we must ask ourselves how can we best advance the work and conditions of volunteers? The answer, I believe, lies in offering ourselves for volunteer service and help bring multitudes more on board.**

**May the efforts by everyone during the International Year of Volunteers be rewarded with a greater public awareness of volunteerism and the incredible impact individuals can have on their communities. I commend all volunteers for truly making a difference to the community.**

**It is now my pleasure to officially launch the International Year of Volunteers 2001 for Namibia.**

**I thank you.**