

**Meeting of the Council of the Socialist International
Geneva, Switzerland, 12th December, 2014.
By Pendukeni Iivula Ithana, Vice President.**

**Mr President, George Papandreou, President of the
Socialist International;**

**Esteemed Mr Luis Ayala, Secretary General of the
Socialist International;**

Members of the Presidium;

Delegates to the Council meeting;

**Ladies and Gentlemen;
Comrades and Friends.**

This meeting is taking place, at a time when the geopolitical situation is of serious concern to the world: The war in the Middle East and the continued unresolved question of the occupation of the Palestine by Israel; the unending conflict in the Horn of Africa; the Civil War in the youngest country on the African Continent, South Sudan; the Civil War in the

Central African Republic; Boko Haram acts of terror in Nigeria; the conflict in the Sahel region and of course, the conflict in the Baltic Sea area, are all of grave concern to the world as they are the major causes of humanitarian suffering, refugees and displacement.

Mr President, greetings from Namibia and SWAPO Party, a political Party I have the greatest honour to represent in this organization. I am addressing you shortly after we concluded

yet another general election for Presidential and National Assembly, of which my Party and its Presidential candidate, Dr. Hage Geingob won overwhelmingly, 86% and 80% respectively. This was yet one of the peaceful elections we held and two phenomena are worth mentioning here:

- the SWAPO Party List of candidates for the National Assembly was composed in a zebra style of 50/50 gender representation. Members who will go to Parliament from the SWAPO Party side will be 50% men and 50% women.

- For the first time, Namibia used Electronic Voting Machines, (EVMs) a system we have adopted to eliminate some of the challenges experienced in the past, such as spoiled ballots, delay in manual voting and counting and disputes over the election results. With electronic voting machines, these problems are minimized if not completely eliminated. We congratulate ourselves for introducing this system for the first time on the African continent.

Mr President,

We are living in a globalized world. Much of what is happening in one corner of the globe can have effect on the other parts. The conflicts and wars in those parts of the world mentioned before put severe pressure on other countries where refugees and asylum seekers run to. Kenya, for example, which hosts thousands of refugees from Somalia has become a target of terrorist attacks. Many Kenyan

innocent lives have been lost in this senseless war. The same can be said about other countries hosting refugees. We have seen and heard of thousands of young Africans risking their lives at sea in search for a better life in Europe. Countries in the Mediterenia have become overburdened by the influx of those running away either from conflict in North African or poverty in other countries in Africa and elsewhere.

This Council meeting is taking place after the 65th annual session of the Executive Committee of the UNHCR (EXCOM), which was preceded by the **High Level Segment on Enhancing International Cooperation, Solidarity, Local Capacities and Humanitarian Action for Refugees in Africa, which took place here in Geneva from the 29th September to the 3rd October, 2014.**

The segment was organised by the High Commission for Refugees, especially to pay particular attention to the

refugee situation in Africa, after the realization that conflicts elsewhere in the world attract more attention and resources than in Africa, while the continent hosts 3.5 million refugees or a third of the 51,000,000 million refugees in the world.

Mr President, in his message on World Refugee Day, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said and I quote, “Poor countries host vastly more displaced people than wealthier ones. While anti-refugee sentiment is heard loudest in industrialized countries, developing nations host 80 per cent of the world’s refugees. This situation demands an equitable solution.”

Mr President,

If the facts and figures outlined by Mr Antonio Guterres, the High Commissioner for Refugees is anything to go by, the world is faced with a humanitarian crisis in terms of refugees and displaced people. It is no longer a question of how much rich countries can financially contribute towards humanitarian assistance. In his own words expressed here yesterday, "the humanitarian organizations are no longer able to clean up the mess," the world is in a mess.

The causes of the "mess" according to many who took the floor before me, which have dramatic consequences are amongst others, undemocratic governance, corruption, unequal wealth distribution, tribalism or anti semetism,

discrimination, oppression, segregation, poverty, hopelessness, particularly amongst the youth, impunity and others.

One particular phenomenon, I would like to explain, witnessed only in Southern Africa and which can sooner than later have dangerous consequence in that part of the world is the land ownership pattern. Land in my country is privately owned as a legacy of colonial dispossession policy. The situation is such that 5% of the population owns 90% of the arable land in the country. With the adoption of the independence constitution with the Bill of Rights, this status got the protection of the constitution.

The youth and those born after independence find this situation unacceptable and have started mobilizing themselves around this vexing issue. Measures to address this, such as the "Willing Buyer Willing Seller" method of land acquisition, have proven to be ineffective as there are no willing sellers, and hence the situation has become a ticking bomb waiting to explode if a quick and amicable solution is not found.

Mr President and dear colleague,

This platform and this organization has become the only viable rallying avenue for galvanizing for peace and peaceful coexistence in the world as it has the morale high ground to

do so. Listening to the intervention of our members from Palestine and Isreal yesterday, I was somehow encouraged that the solution for the Palestinian issue might be in sight. We should encourage the dialogue to continue on the basis of the two states solution.

The question of Western Sahara is another for which Africa and the world can not keep silence as this is considered a colonial occupation by Morroco, a fellow African country. It will be a traversity of Justice if the international community is not insisting for the enforcement of UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples. In addition to this, I would like to remind this august gathering not to reneck on its own

resolution taken at the Cape Town Congress in 2012 on the same issue of Western Sahara. The sooner this question is resolved the better for world peace and harmony.

I will conclude by echoing words expressed before. The humanitarian crises the world is facing today have only one viable solution, and this is a political one, built around good governance, democracy and the respect for human rights.

I thank you!