**Intersessional Seminar on Youth and Human Rights**

12 April 2021 | 10AM – 12PM & 3PM – 5PM (CEST)

**STATEMENT**

*(as of 30 March 2021)*

**PER: WAYNE RUKERO**

**INSTITUTION: NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL OF NAMIBIA**

**Youth mainstreaming in human rights mechanisms and next steps on youth and human rights at the international level**

­­­­­­­­

Fundamental to Youth Mainstreaming is to enable youth-centric institutions and processes in development planning within and across all sectors to realise equitable development for youth and our societies. Moreover, Youth Mainstreaming hinges on youth participation in all spheres and levels of development planning, without which positive and equitable outcomes for youth are not possible; and that there must be a sense of acknowledgment on the part of the older citizens within the national context about the implications of intergenerational relations among youth and adults, and the realization of young people’s unique developmental rights and evolving capacities in conceiving and delivering policies and plans for them.

Within the Namibian context, a widely cherished stride in the spirit of Youth Mainstreaming, and specifically intergenerational equity, was the appointment of Hon. Emma Theofelus as the Deputy-Minister of Information, Communication and Technology at the age of 23 during 2020, which appointment also enlisted her as one of the youngest cabinet ministers in Africa.

The story of Hon. Theofelus is of course a drop in the ocean when considering the thousands of young people roaming the streets across Africa and the diaspora – full of capacity, the necessary skills and expertise. Therefore, ensuring equity and justice for young people in global and national planning (as for any other group side lined in policy- making) is critical, and realizes a fundamental human right. This is an important ethical and moral imperative, but it is also a political priority considering the explicit articulation of national and global equality for all, including for all ages, in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Furthermore, it must be highlighted that Youth Mainstreaming is a transformative process that is inclusive and consciously proactive, placing the capabilities and rights of young men and women alongside those of other marginalised community members in development planning. To this end, recommendations for effective implementation of Youth Mainstreaming must include:

* moving beyond youth projects, programmes or ‘youth activities’, to holistic attitudinal, strategic and financing shifts in engaging, planning and delivering for, and with, youth;
* strong partnerships across stakeholders including diverse youth groups and the youth sector, and an ability to involve and respect all stakeholders committed to youth rights;
* ensuring that youth mainstreaming does not reinforce inequality and injustice;
* local, national and international contexts and analysing global systems, ideologies, policies and practices, as well as the localised realities of our nations and communities, including the ways these influence our ability to deliver on youth-centric policy and planning.

Overall, a rights-based approach to Youth mainstreaming that perceives young people as rights holders and the state and all institutions as duty-bearers must be encouraged. This identifies children and young people as agents of change and partners in the development process – as articulated in articles defining their right to participation, specifically Articles 18–21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Articles 12–16 and Article 17 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.