



INTERNATIONAL ALBINISM DAY
REMARKS BY
HONOURABLE DEPUTY MINISTER OF JUSTICE,
MRS. LIDWINA SHAPWA
13 JUNE 2019
SCHOOL FOR THE VISUAL IMPAIRED

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Learners of the School for the Visually Impaired,

I am very honoured to be here today at the annual celebration of International Albinism Awareness Day.

Albinism is a genetic disorder that makes affected individuals unable to produce melanin, the natural pigment that gives colour to hair, skin, and eyes, and protects against the harmful effects of UV radiation. Albinism is an inherited genetic condition as a result of gene or genes from their parents. It is not contagious and you cannot "catch" it from someone else. It is not a curse, a punishment by God or as a result of the mother's involvement with a white man.

This day came when on the 18th of December 2014, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the 13th of June to be the International Albinism Awareness Day. Thus, the importance of this day is to create awareness for albinism and to advocate for the prevention of attacks and discrimination against persons with albinism. The day is equally used to celebrate the enjoyment of Human Rights of Persons with Albinism and to educate the public on issues concerning albinism, to

mobilize political will and resources to address issues faced by people of albinism within our communities.

Persons with albinism have faced, and continue to face, ongoing hurdles and challenges that seriously undermine their enjoyment of human rights. From stigma and discrimination, to barriers in health, education, and invisibility in social and political arenas. In addition, in several countries they are subjected to heinous attacks and killings. Despite all these challenges, persons with albinism especially here in Namibia, remain positive and are **STILL STANDING STRONG**.

In solidarity with persons with albinism worldwide, I urge everyone to make use of the following hashtags on your social media platforms **#stillstrong #iaad #iaad2019 #AlbinismDay #standupforhumanrights**.

Namibia has the most albinos per capita in the world and is considered to have some of the most progressive legislation and national policies safeguarding people with albinism. The Namibian government provides disability grants and sunscreen to people with albinism, in a quest to subsidise the upkeep that is required for albinos, whose cost for skin care, for instance, can be costly in a harsh and hot climate like Namibia's. While discrimination against people with albinism is but one issue, the biggest threat to Namibian persons with albinisms is skin cancer. With the generous donation of hats from the First National Bank today, we hope to assist in the fight against the harsh environmental conditions that persons with albinism experience.

The Ministry of Justice is committed to the promotion of human rights and the rights of persons with albinism as part of the disability group through its various legal frameworks. The Office of the Ombudsman intends to carry out public consultation in Oshakati, Andara and Windhoek in July this year. The consultations are intending to carry out an enquiry on the forms of discriminations faced by persons with albinism and will come up with possible recommendations on how to address discriminatory practises if found to exist. In addition, the Directorate Legal Services also assist the ministry in fulfilling its human rights mandate by report to various rights treaty bodies on various human rights issues, of which the rights of persons with albinism is also included.

Director of ceremonies,

The theme for this year's International Albinism Awareness Day is "Still Standing Strong" .

This theme is a call to recognize, celebrate and stand in solidarity with persons with albinism around the world, and to support their cause; from their accomplishments and positive practices to the promotion and protection of their human rights.

Today, I wish to encourage you to live by the theme set for this year's celebration. You are not disabled, you are very able and it is just an aspect of your identity which happens to be distinctive. Albinism which you happen to have should not be a barrier to achieving any goal you wish to achieve in life. I want you to resist to blend in because you are meant to stand out. You are distinctive and I would like to urge you all to make use of your distinctive qualities to change the world with your unique gifts and talents. Be proud of who you are and be strong at all times.

Before I conclude, I would like to leave you with the following quote by Marianne Williamson who once said,

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine as children do. It's not just in some of us; it is in everyone. And as we let our own lights shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

Shine girls and shine boys with albinism, liberate yourselves from any kind of fear. Your rights as human beings are well protected under the supreme law of this country. Know that the government and the people of Namibia respect your rights like any other person. You have a right to education, to health and to employment and to anything else.

With those few words I thank you for listening and enjoy the day.

I thank you.