

Foreign Minister Maas on the conclusion of negotiations with Namibia

28.05.2021 - Press release 

Foreign Minister Maas issued the following statement today (28 May) regarding the conclusion of negotiations with Namibia:

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I am pleased and indeed grateful that we have agreed with Namibia on how to deal with the darkest chapter of our shared history. After more than five years, Ruprecht Polenz and his Namibian counterpart Zed Ngavirue were able to conclude the negotiations which they were conducting on behalf of our two Governments and based on the guidance of our two Parliaments. Representatives of the Herero and Nama communities were closely involved in the negotiations on the Namibian side.

Our aim was and remains to find a shared path towards genuine reconciliation in memory of the victims. This includes being unreserved and unflinching in naming the events of the German colonial period in what is now Namibia and in particular the atrocities between 1904 and 1908. We will now officially call these events what they are from today's perspective: a genocide.

Given Germany's historical and moral responsibility, we will ask Namibia and the descendants of the victims for forgiveness.

As a gesture of recognition of the immeasurable suffering inflicted on the victims, we want to support Namibia and the victims' descendants with a substantial programme to the tune of 1.1 billion euro for reconstruction and development. The communities affected by the genocide will play a key role in shaping and implementing this programme. Legal claims for compensation cannot be derived from it.

Meaningful reconciliation cannot be decreed from above. It is beyond doubt that the crimes committed during German colonial rule have long been a burden on our relations with Namibia. The past cannot be put to rest. Recognising our guilt and offering an apology however is an important step to come to terms with the crimes of the past and to shape the future together.

Background Information:

The projects financed by Germany focus, at the request of the Namibian side, on the fields of land reform, including the purchase and development of land, agriculture, rural infrastructure and water supplies, as well as vocational education, as central priorities in the – partly marginalised – areas where the Nama and Herero have settled. These projects are to be implemented in addition to bilateral development cooperation which is also to be continued.