

# Good Things Come to Those Who Wait? The Joint Reconciliation Declaration of Germany and Namibia for the Herero and Nama Genocide

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## I. Introduction

At the end of May 2021, more than 100 years after the atrocities committed by German colonial powers in present-day Namibia and following six years of bilateral negotiations between the German foreign ministry and the Namibian government, Heiko Maas<sup>1</sup> – then German minister of foreign affairs – issued a statement on the joint reconciliation declaration<sup>2</sup> between Namibia and Germany. Maas stated that Germany

[...] will now also officially call these events what they were from today's perspective: a genocide. In light of 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 intend to support Namibia and the descendants of the victims with a substantial programme of 1.1 billion Euro for reconstruction and development.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Heiko Maas was German minister of foreign affairs from 14 May 2018 until 8 December 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Joint Declaration by the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Namibia, 'United in Remembrance of our Colonial Past, United on our Will to Reconcile, United in our Vision of the Future' (Joint Declaration) (2021), available at <https://www.parliament.na/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Joint-Declaration-Document-Genocide-rt.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> 'Wir werden diese Ereignisse jetzt auch offiziell als das bezeichnen, was sie aus heutiger Perspektive waren: ein Völkermord. Im Lichte der historischen und moralischen Verantwortung Deutschlands werden wir Namibia und die Nachkommen der Opfer um Vergebung bitten. Als Geste der Anerkennung des unermesslichen Leids, das den Opfern zugefügt wurde, wollen wir Namibia und die Nachkommen der Opfer mit einem substanziellen Programm in Höhe von 1,1 Mrd. Euro zum Wiederaufbau und zur Entwicklung unterstützen', Federal Foreign Office, *Außenminister Maas zum Abschluss der Verhandlungen mit Namibia*, 28 May 2021, available at <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/newsroom/-/2463396>.