

fighting women

THEN + NOW

International Women's Day



International Women's Day was officially commemorated for the first time in Namibian history on 8 March this year. Organised by various women's groups in Windhoek, two meetings were held, one at the CCN's offices in Katutura and the other in the Parliament Building's garden, seat of the new government.

The origins of this day can be traced back to 19 July 1889 when Clara Zetkin, a German lady and outstanding leader of the International Working Class, proposed the day in a speech in the Danish capital Copenhagen.

8 March was taken as a significant date in memory of the first women's demonstration in the streets of New York. On that day in 1857, women of the needle trades demanded better working conditions and the right to vote. Ever since 8 March 1910, the day has been celebrated as International Women's Day.

At the first meeting the Minister of Housing and Local Government, Dr Libertine Amathila addressed

the crowd of women saying that women were not fighting against men but that we wanted respect in our own right, as women and not as servants.

She also called for the scrapping of "lobola", the traditional bride price, since when men pay "lobola", they think they own the women they have paid for. This practice leads to a lot of problems for women since they are regarded as possessions and one cannot possess a human being.

Dr Amathila called on women to support female candidates in the coming municipal and regional elections, no matter what their past political affiliations had been and that women should support each other as women foremost.

With the onset of the evening, a group of about 300 women gathered in the Parliament Building's garden. Amidst light rain and a cool evening breeze, the women lit candles, sang freedom and religious songs and shared in the spirit of solidarity. Until this time again next year!