

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR HAGE GEINGOB

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

ON

**THE OCCASION OF THE 2016 SPRING GRADUATION
CEREMONY OF THE NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY (NUST)**

ON

14 OCTOBER 2016

AT

09:00

AT

SAFARI COURT HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTRE

WINDHOEK

Vice-Chancellor of Namibia University of Science and Technology, Dr Tjama Tjivikua,

Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly and Chancellor of NUST, Professor Peter Katjavivi

Honourable Minister of Higher Education, Training and Innovation, Dr Itah Kandjii-Murangii

Honourable Ministers and Members of Parliament

Chairperson of the Council of the Namibia University of Science and Technology, Advocate Esi Schimming-Chase, and Council Members Present

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps

NUST Management and Staff Members

Honoured Graduates, Parents and Friends

Distinguished Invited Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great honour and pride that I join you today as we celebrate the success of young minds at the Spring Graduation Ceremony of the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). The young have dedicated themselves to hard work, and excellence, and today they see the fruits of their labour.

The NUST graduation is an important occasion for a number of reasons: first and foremost, it is about congratulating all the students who have received their diplomas and degrees this morning. In fact, they are the second cohort of students to their qualifications since NUST was established as a new University at the end of last

year. At the same time, we receive with gratitude the graduates into the job market. This occasion is special for me as well, as it the first time that I am part of this celebration of excellence at NUST. Therefore, I would like to thank the Vice-Chancellor, Dr Tjama Tjivikua and the Council of NUST for inviting me to participate at this important occasion. I think it is also appropriate to express my congratulations to Dr Tjivikua and the University community for having worked tirelessly to achieve the status of a university. Your leadership is exemplary.

Secondly, let me offer my congratulations to the Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly, Professor Peter Katjivivi, who was recently elected as the founding Chancellor of NUST and hence this morning in line with the NUST Act, your qualifications were conferred by the Chancellor of the University.

Professor Katjavivi brings to NUST the aura and prestige your University deserves, having been an academic and scholar as well as Vice-Chancellor for many years. Furthermore, allow me to congratulate the newly appointed Council Members, and the Chair Advocate Esi Schimming-Chase and her Deputy Chair Mr Goms Menettè on their appointments as office bearers. Now all the governance structures of NUST have been duly constituted. To you, Advocate Schimming-Chase and the Council, given that good corporate governance is a prerequisite for effectiveness in conformance and performance functions within organisations, it behoves me to state that I have confidence that you will tackle the big task ahead of you to ensure that NUST becomes a beacon of good corporate governance. The Council will need to create an environment that will promote and enhance good management practices to help the University maintain its record of excellence and enhance its reputation.

Director of Ceremonies

The development agenda of our country is guided by Vision 2030, which envisages that Namibia should become a knowledge-based economy by 2030. When the Founding President of the Republic of Namibia, Dr Sam Nujoma, launched this important national initiative in 2004, we thought that there was ample time to accomplish the set goals and objectives. But I think we are far from the many goals and you will agree with me that as we move closer to 2030 there is urgency that we should work harder to achieve all these set goals. However, I am comforted by the

fact that Government is on track with the development of the next phase of our national development plans, NDP 5, so that we get closer to the set goals.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have just returned from an extensive visit to the United States of America where, among other things, we sensitised the world, the American public, influential people and investors about the needs and opportunities set out in our development agenda. We were positively received by the world and American communities. I attended the 71st Session of the UN General Assembly which looked at reports on the financing of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – these are the new goals adopted by world leaders, including Namibia, for countries to mobilise efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind. Coincidentally, like Vision 2030, the SDGs also need to be achieved by 2030. We have thus incorporated the SDGs into our national development agenda.

Therefore, to accelerate our pace to achieve our goals, therefore, my administration developed the Harambee Prosperity Plan (HPP) which addresses the key task of building the Namibian nation by focusing on five critical areas, namely: a) effective governance and service delivery; b) economic advancement; c) social progression; d) infrastructure development; and e) international relations and cooperation.

It is in this regard, that, as Government, we invite the new graduates to be part of the great task of building the Namibian nation. You have multiple prominent roles to play to assist us with meeting our deadline of 2020. One of the components of this Plan is the Youth Enterprise Development, which has an important future projection of establishing 121 youth-owned rural enterprises, each permanently employing a minimum of five to ten youth by 2020. I think NUST, as a technological university, is best placed to help build the necessary capacity that will make these rural enterprises a reality.

Furthermore, our objective is to create an enabling environment for private sector entrepreneurial start-ups and growth-oriented SME's, as well as to facilitate the establishment of youth-owned enterprises, through government structures.

Director of Ceremonies

There are other areas particularly in human capital development that pose a serious challenge and if left unattended are likely to cause delays in the effective implementation of the HPP, and perhaps a social revolt. As a result the Minister of Higher Education, Training and Innovation, Hon Dr Itah Kandjii-Murangi together with UNESCO, has recently produced a report on the Policy Review of Namibia's "**TVET, Higher Education and Innovation**" which analyses the current situation. The report recognises the critical role of TVET in supplying skills for the expansion of the economy and, therefore, recommends that greater effectiveness capacity, in terms of quantity and quality as well as relevance. This is required within the subsector.

In a similar vein, higher education and innovation are faced with certain challenges Namibia has one of the lowest gross student enrolment ratio, and a lot of students are still unable to enter higher education. Other key issues relate to (i) a low percentage of academics holding Doctoral qualifications; (ii) an equally low percentage of investments in research and development; and (iii) a low level of engagement between our institutions and industry on research and development. Consequently, it is not surprising that our innovation thrust is not prominent or dynamic. We need to collectively address these challenges. From the Government's side the policy environment and the resourcing issues are receiving urgent attention since we are mindful that without sustainable strategic interventions our plans to achieve Vision 2030 will become a deferred dream.

Let me not leave you with a picture that we are only faced with challenges and we are, therefore, not making any progress. In fact, many positive things are happening, for example, through our international cooperation with the Government of India, a Centre of Excellence on Information Technology will soon be established at NUST. This facility will serve as a hub for enhancing capacity and knowledge of students and professionals alike. At the same time, I am delighted and encouraged by the development of the first of its kind Solar Taxi for Namibia. These wonderful signals coming from NUST indicate that if we strengthen our collaboration as expected of a dynamic national system of innovation, there is great potential for rapid progress.

Director of Ceremonies

As I conclude, let me once again congratulate NUST and its graduates. I wish you all an exciting future ahead. My hope is to see you grow into accomplished professionals, whose success is defined not just by grades, status or wealth, but by your pride in doing something meaningful, something that you believe in.

As future drivers and participants in the knowledge world which can be extremely complex to navigate in, please remember these fundamental truths about knowledge from two American authors. Louis L'Amour states, ***“Knowledge is like money: to be of value if it is circulated, and in circulating it can increase in quantity and, hopefully, in value.”*** More importantly, Brian Tracy makes the point that, ***“Those people who develop the ability to continuously acquire new and better forms of knowledge that they can apply to their work and to their lives will be the movers and shakers in our society for the indefinite future.”*** Finally, remember Namibia expects a lot from you – all the best for the future! A future in which you will contribute, innovate and prosper.

I thank you.

- Ends.