



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

HONOURABLE DR ITAH KANDJII-MURANGI

MINISTER OF HIGH EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INNOVATION

AT

THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2017

OF THE NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
(NUST)

ON

01 FEBRUARY 2017

AT

09:00

IN FRONT OF THE ELIZABETH HAUS

NUST CAMPUS

WINDHOEK

Director of Ceremonies

Prof Tjama Tjivikua, Vice-Chancellor of the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST);

Ms Esi Schimming-Chase, Chairperson of the NUST Council and the all Council Members Present;

Dr. Andrew Niikondo, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs and Research & senior management;

Deans, Directors and the entire Staff;

Mr. Oscar Mwandangi, SRC President, the entire Council & all Students;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning!

Thank you for your kind invitation which permits me this morning, to experience this illuminating moment with the University community. It is an honour for me to be a part of your official opening for the academic year 2017. Indeed, it is with great pride and appreciation that I have accepted this opportunity to welcome the new and returning students, and staff to the Namibia University of Science and Technology. A special and very warm welcome goes to all the first year students who are joining NUST for the 2017 academic year.

Today is a special day for you as you are experiencing a new beginning and also a new phase in your life. In the next few years, you will need to work hard to accomplish and master your course of studies. You will also have an opportunity to enrich your experience at the University by working with one another and with your lecturers and by so doing, further the mission of this University, which

hinges on educating student leaders for the future. One of your primary goals should be to fulfill the mission of this University by discovering new knowledge that will benefit our community and the country at large.

Myles Monroe once said and I quote:

“The deepest craving in the human spirit is to find a sense of significance and relevance. The search for relevance in life is the ultimate pursuit of man”.

Unquote.

Access is not enough, higher education institutions should come to the realization that they are the platforms for unlocking students’ potential, talent, purpose, significance and relevance. To be able to do this, higher education institutions themselves should raise the bar and remain relevant in all aspects: their course offerings; teaching; research; student support systems; stakeholders’ engagement and others.

Director of Ceremonies

Some years back, I was sitting like you, excited, full of anticipation but equally feeling overwhelmed by the experience of being a freshman. But in the end, the University life brought enlightenment and self-development to me and I am here today because of the knowledge that I gained from my university experience.

Through learning you achieve growth both in your personal development and professional careers. However, this growth can only happen through your individual commitment to succeed and through your passion for learning. This goes to show that being at the University is a team game. The academic staff and you the students, are both key players in the team; each one depends on the other.

This is why, the success and/or failure of students is usually linked to the quality of leadership and lecturing offered by the affected Faculty or Department.

As you embark on this journey to study at NUST, do not forget those that have helped you to advance to this level, that is, your families, your friends and mostly importantly your teachers. Your parents would want to know how you are progressing and coping with University life and, therefore, do not discard them now that you are a University student particularly those of you who have parents in rural areas and far away from Windhoek.

Let me assure you that you have joined our very own good and innovative university that has shown tremendous growth and has championed excellence in some areas of its profile - teaching and research and service. For instance, in terms of innovation, this University is hosting the Fabrication Laboratory, a cornerstone for technological prototyping and innovation, as well as the Innovation Design Laboratory, through which it has developed a prototype solar energy taxi. Over the years this University has distinguished itself through significant strides in spatial science: architecture, town and regional planning, engineering, journalism and media technology, and biomedical science, to mention a few areas.

I will urge you all to continue to innovate and strengthen the University and the departments and faculties that are pioneering and producing cutting-edge results. Our expectation is to see further development and refinement of the different fields that lead to some reputable centers of excellence and tackle the main issues of our time.

I urge you, students to not only focus on what you have enrolled for; widen your scope of knowledge and experience by attending lectures and seminars in other departments and faculties. For example, if you are studying towards a degree in human resources, attend classes in different faculties like health, spatial sciences and environment. It is important that you engage with others and learn more about other fields. This will help you to broaden your knowledge and give you different perspectives about life and the challenges facing humanity. It is important for universities to engage in endeavors that will provide us with solutions to the many challenges our societies are facing, including the prevailing economic state of our nation.

Director of Ceremonies

The challenges facing higher education are complex, and concerted efforts are needed to provide new solutions. Some of the challenges include lack of funding for higher education and financial assistance to students. However, despite the current financial and economic situation, the Ministry is committed to provide appropriate funding to our public universities and financial support to needy students. Thus, the students who are funded by the Namibia Student Financial Aid Fund (NSFAF) will continue to receive their support and their funding will not be affected.

The Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Innovation has defined its policies and programmes, which include strengthening the national capacity for higher productivity. Therein, we recognize and highlight the crucial role that University education, training and innovation should play in national

development. In this regard, the Ministry is committed to advance the higher education system and we are currently working at expanding the national technical and vocational training system. We are thus concerned with improving the status and quality of our economy by creating the desired positive outputs and outcomes. The envisioned TVET expansion will require a strong pool of qualified instructors. This is why over the next few years, the TVET Instructors' Training Unit housed here will be transformed into a fully-fledged Faculty to cater for the pre- and in-service education and training of all TVET instructors.

These measures are intended to create more opportunities for the students and the youth to access higher education and training so as to acquire skills in those areas needed by industries. As a science and technology oriented University, NUST must continue to work with and to Industry. Collaboration and co-operation with industry is of paramount importance in the areas of research and curriculum development and internship. It is such ties with industry which broaden students' knowledge and skills to be employable upon graduation or thereafter.

The SRCs and the rest of the NUST student body, you belong to the NUST family for your academic advancement, know the structures and rules that govern your stay at this institution. We expect you to do to always engage and involve your institutions' relevant structures when in doubt or aggrieved. Your legitimate concerns and issues must be presented to the right structures and /or management here and be resolved here. Learn to guard the peace and tranquility of your campus and University jealously.

Vice-Chancellor and the entire staff, we owe it to them and the nation to work at maintaining a peaceful working environment that engenders teaching and learning; we owe it to them and the nation to serve at the best of our abilities; to

go that extra mile – after all, it is in their becoming that we, as educators, are fulfilled.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the University Council and Management for running a good show. And I would once again welcome everyone to campus. I urge the new students to live an active life on campus and in society and participate in sports, in student associations and in volunteering groups. There is also the cultural festival that showcases the diversity of cultures of students who come from many countries in Africa, Europe and Asia. Do engage and learn from others, and become global citizens. I hope your time at the Namibia University of Science and Technology will be productive and fruitful and filled with many good experiences.

I thank you.