

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY
HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBWA, PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA, ON THE OCCASION
OF THE 15TH GRADUATION CEREMONY
OF THE POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA**

17 APRIL 2010

WINDHOEK

**Check Against Delivery*

Director of Ceremonies and Rector of the Polytechnic of Namibia, Dr. Tjama Tjivikua,
 Honourable Ministers,
 Distinguished Members of the Council of the Polytechnic of Namibia,
 Honourable Members of Parliament,
 Honourable Governors,
 Honourable Regional and Local Authority Councillors,
 Esteemed Traditional, Regional and Community Leaders,
 Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
 Esteemed Administrators and Scholars,
 Families and Friends of the Graduates,
 Distinguished Graduates,
 Members of the Media,
 Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to join community of the Polytechnic of Namibia on this auspicious occasion, which marks its 15th Graduation Ceremony. This is a fitting recognition and reward for the years of hard work and dedication of our young people who graduate here today, equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to enter the job market.

I would, therefore, like to congratulate the Class of 2010 for their hard work and diligence, and the successful completion of their studies. I would also like to extend my appreciation of their parents, relatives and friends, as well as their sponsors whose support and encouragement contributed to their success. Their success is also your success, it is our success. You should therefore be proud. I have always emphasised my strong belief that education must be seen and treated as a joint-venture where all stakeholders such as parents, communities, the private sector, and government play their respective roles. This approach must be at the core of a student-centred and stakeholder-driven education system. All our parents, guardians, lecturers, professors and education administrators are the key stakeholders in this process.

Director of Ceremonies,

This year, we commemorated the 20th Anniversary of Namibia's independence and nationhood. After the attainment of independence twenty years ago, the trajectory of our struggle assumed a new focus of national socio-economic development. This was to be underpinned by a modern education system at primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

The Polytechnic of Namibia was established as one of our main institutions of higher learning to help our nation to train and develop human resource capacity that can enable our country to achieve its development goals and objectives.

Our Government expects institutions such as the Polytechnic to play their role in emancipating our nation from the chains of ignorance and underdevelopment. The Polytechnic must, therefore, continue to transform and reposition itself into a catalyst for social transformation and development of the needed skills and knowledge. This year's theme for 2010 is very appropriate for this nation. The theme for the Graduation Ceremony this year, reflects the orientation of this institution and its commitment to contribute to the development of our nation.

It is a source of pride for me and for our government that thousands of people have graduated from this institution since its inception only 15 years ago. These include both Namibians and students from other countries, in different fields. Many of these graduates now serve the public and private sectors of our economy, in different capacities.

I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to the Polytechnic's Council, management and staff, the student bodies, as well as all external stakeholders for their unwavering commitment to building a strong and proactive academic institution of which all Namibians can rightfully be proud of. Not only is the Polytechnic making a positive contribution to our country's development efforts, but it is already recognised among the best institutions of higher learning on the African continent. Its growing profile is underlined by the impressive number of national and international awards and accolades it has won over the years.

I am informed that during the past year, some of the Schools and Departments, within the Polytechnic, the Rector, and some of your lecturers have been awarded prizes for their outstanding academic achievements. I offer you my warmest congratulations and best wishes for your continued achievements.

Director of Ceremonies,

The people of Namibia spoke unequivocally and in no uncertain terms last November when they went to the polls to elect their leaders of choice. They gave me and SWAPO Party the mandate to lead our country for the next five years and to achieve greater heights of socio-economic development. One of the top policy priorities for our Government is nation building through education.

I would like to assure you that our SWAPO Party Government is committed to deliver on the promise of providing high quality education to our people. Education is an important element in our strategy to address poverty, reduce unemployment and under-development. Through education and training and the provision of skills, we can fast-track our progress towards socio-economic development. It is for this reason that since independence, our Government has consistently allocated the largest share of the national budget to the Education sector. On average, this sector has received about 25 percent of the total national budget.

Education also features prominently in our national medium and long term planning and policies such as NDP3 and Vision 2030 as well as in our plans to achieve the targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In 2005, our Government also adopted the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP), a 15-year strategic plan to improve the quality of education outcomes in Namibia. I, therefore, urge all our stakeholders in education to redouble their efforts to make our education system work for the long term benefit of our country and her people.

We are all mindful of the fact that there is greater competition as the world continues to integrate. This is the reality of the 21st Century. In order to compete successfully in the global economy, Namibians must be properly equipped with the necessary tools of information technology and competencies that have become the new currency in the modern economic system. Thus, institutions such as the Polytechnic of Namibia must continue to be innovative and to impart the required and relevant skills to the students through sound academic programmes and modes of teaching.

Within this context, I am very pleased to hear that the theme of the Polytechnic of Namibia for the 2010 Academic Year is *Re-thinking Competitiveness for Socio-Economic Development*. As we celebrate our 20th year of independence, it is a timely reminder that we need to constantly adjust our understanding of the socio-economic challenges that we face, and to make sure that our students have access to education of the right type and of the right calibre, if our nation is to meet these challenges effectively.

One of the key catalysts for improved socio-economic competitiveness is a culture of entrepreneurial thinking. Our nation needs graduates who are more than just job-seekers. We need graduates equipped with the skills, know-how, confidence and ambition that are essential for becoming successful entrepreneurs. Creating more entrepreneurs is an important means of combating unemployment and creating wealth for all our people.

I am encouraged by the Polytechnic of Namibia's efforts in this regard, as demonstrated in its ProLearning degree programme for young entrepreneurs, the Centre for Entrepreneurial Development, the Harold Pupkewitz Graduate School of Business, and the Innovation Marketplace of the Namibia Business Innovation Centre.

Director of Ceremonies,

Your theme, *Re-thinking Competitiveness for Socio-Economic Development* also invites us as a nation to re-evaluate our development strategies and policies. It challenges us to develop new products, services and market opportunities, and to explore new ways of enhancing productivity.

This will enable us to improve our nation's regional and international competitiveness, resulting in the improvement of the living standards of all our citizens. With its dynamic leadership, the Polytechnic is well positioned to contribute to this national endeavour.

In order for our nation to become really competitive, we need to produce a critical mass of engineers, scientists, computer technicians, accountants, policy analysts and other professionals. It is no longer enough to possess knowledge and technical skills. We need a cadre of knowledge workers that are flexible, creative, and innovative in the way they apply the knowledge they possess, and who ascribe to a culture of continuous learning.

Dear graduates, you have been equipped with the knowledge and skills that the modern graduate needs. The institution has done its best to weave into your training those characteristics of a knowledge worker that are crucial to your success in your professional careers.

I am confident that you will make the best of the knowledge you have acquired as you set sail on the great ocean of opportunity that awaits you in your chosen career paths. Go and work hard for your individual professional growth and prosperity as well as for the advancement of Namibia's development agenda.

I want to remind you that as our future engineers, scientists, accountants and entrepreneurs, you will be called upon to manage, drive and develop strategies for different organisations in this country. You will be called upon to fulfil the task of continuing our endeavours to craft a better life for all Namibians in line with our Vision 2030 and other national development strategies.

As you graduate, you now have the responsibility of enhancing the social, political, economic and moral fabric of our society. We join you today as you celebrate your academic achievement. As a Government, we look forward to your contribution to the wellbeing of our nation, the growth of our economy and the social and economic development of our nation. We expect you to serve our nation to the best of your abilities in the various capacities of your professional lives. Once again, I say congratulations to our graduands and to the Polytechnic of Namibia for giving our nation yet another crop of tertiary level graduates.

I thank you.