



**POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA**

---

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

**MS BATSEBA UNOMUINJO KATJIUONGUA**

***DIRECTOR, SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES: MINISTRY OF HEALTH  
AND SOCIAL SERVICES***

AT THE SIGNING CEREMONY OF THE MEMORANDUM OF  
UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA AND  
THE NATIONAL DISABILITY COUNCIL (NDC).

15 MAY 2012

HOTEL SCHOOL (POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA)

**WINDHOEK**

Distinguished Director of Ceremonies,  
Rector of Polytechnic, Prof. Tjama Tjivikua,  
Distinguished Permanent Secretaries  
Director of the National Disability Council, Mr. Martin Limbo,  
Development Partners,  
Business Community,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
All protocol observed.

Director of Ceremonies,

It is a distinct honour for me to address you this morning at this auspicious occasion of the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), between the Polytechnic of Namibia and the National Disability Council (NDC).

We have all come to know that the Polytechnic is a highly reputable institution higher learning that delivers quality education, and therefore there is a great demand for employment of its graduates. It is not surprising that one finds these graduates in the employment of many Namibian institutions. In signing this MOU, we are confident that the Polytechnic will offer programmes to up skill officials who deal with the people with disabilities on a day-to-day basis, but more importantly,

empower them such that they are able to make a meaningful contribution to society.

Director of Ceremonies,

Allow me to share briefly how we have come to this point of implementing various programmes for people with disabilities. Namibia was an active participant in the development of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which was ratified by our Government in 2007. During the process of our participation in the development of the Convention, the National Policy on Disability was developed and approved in 1997. This policy paved the way for the development and passing of the National Disability Council Act, 2004 (Act No. 26 of 2004) which ultimately provided a legislative framework for the establishment of the National Disability Council in 2008 and henceforth the appointment of the secretariat. The main purpose of the National Disability Council is to monitor the implementation of the National Policy across the board.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has introduced a shift of approaches, e.g. not only medical and social approaches, but also the Human Rights approach. Initiating education and training programmes of various types for the benefits of people with

disabilities; and introducing continuing training programmes for those professionals and staff working with them, as well as those in the field of administration of justice, including police and correctional services staff, to name a few, is one way of abiding by the provisions of the Convention.

I am encouraged by the package of programmes that has been developed between the Centre for Entrepreneurship at the Polytechnic of Namibia and the National Disability Council. On the one hand, these will provide knowledge and skills to officers and individuals in government agencies and NGOs who deal with and support the people with disabilities. On the other hand, capacity development for the disabled will be in the areas of computer literacy and basic entrepreneurship training. The latter activities are addressing the core of the requirements of the UN Convention, which states that countries should endeavour to create equal opportunities for the PODs in self-employment, entrepreneurship, development of cooperatives, etc. I have no doubt that this partnership between the National Disability Council and Polytechnic will yield desired outcomes.

Director of Ceremonies,

If we are to mainstream the challenges and issues of disability, it is clear that they are not merely medical, but these at the centre of equality, human rights, and social and economic development agenda. Given the cross-cutting nature of these issues, Ministry of Health and Social Services cannot address these alone. While the Ministry can deal with health and rehabilitation needs of the PODs, there are other pressing needs such as housing, employment, education and training, water, food, human rights protection and others, which require that we form sustainable partnerships across government departments as well as with other sectors in business and society. We need to work persistently to form partnerships locally, nationally and internationally.

However, today in relation to this National Disability Council-Polytechnic partnership, I would like to call upon my colleagues, the permanent secretaries in other government Ministries to support this and nurture this partnership by availing your staff to be trained on disability mainstreaming. This will provide them with a better understanding of the needs and aspirations of people with disabilities and how these needs could be accommodated in the daily functioning of your respective Ministries.

I also want to draw the attention of all of those who work in the area of disability that it is becoming imperative that we should look for partners across continents. International partnerships will provide us platforms for learning from each other and sharing valuable experiences in dealing with disability. Such an approach will foster the spirit of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which is about betterment of the lives of people with disabilities.

Finally, it is important to state that implementing the capacity building programme for disability will require massive resources. Both institutions signing this MOU unfortunately do not have the funding needed to allow the programme to commence immediately. However, where there is a will, there is a way. What is critical is the commitment towards the equalisation of opportunities of PODs that we both share, and together we should overcome the hurdles along the way. I THANK YOU.