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**REMARKS**

**BY**

**PROF TJAMA TJIVIKUA**

*RECTOR OF THE POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA*

**ON**

**THE OCCASION OF THE HANDING OVER OF A  
SPONSORSHIP TO THE WOMEN IN ENGINEERING SOLAR  
LAMP PROJECT**

**11 SEPTEMBER 2013**

**10H00 – 12H00**

**FNB BOARDROOM**

**4TH FLOOR, DIETER VOIGT BOARDROOM**

**WINDHOEK**

Director of Ceremonies, Ms Vicky Muranda, Manager  
Corporate Communications  
Chairperson of the FNB Foundation, Mrs Jane Katjavivi  
Faculty and Students in the Women in Engineering Solar Lamp  
Project Distinguished Invited Guests  
Members of the Media  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning. It is a great pleasure and honour to make a few remarks at this wonderful occasion of the handing over of the **FNB Sponsorship for the Women in Engineering Lamp Project**. Please allow me to recognise Mrs Katjavivi, Chairperson of the FNB Foundation, the organisation that is funding the project of the Women in Engineering.

Let me preface my remarks by stating that engineering has been a field that is male dominated. This is not just a Namibian issue, but it is so, world-wide. Perhaps the statistics in this regard provide us a clearer picture of what obtains in our country – as at **31 January 2009 the total number of engineers (professional and incorporate) as well as engineering technicians registered with the Engineering Council of Namibia stood at 847, of which only 93 (11%) were female.**

It is somewhat disheartening that in an era of modern technological advancement, where **both men and women are enjoy equal rights under the protection of the constitution, yet we find women still drifting to traditionally soft professions such as teaching, nursing, social work and others.** I think time has come and this must change now!

There is a **world-wide effort by governments, industries professional societies and engineering workforce to encourage female school learners to take up engineering as a career of choice** and this is, indeed, commendable. However, the challenge of increasing the percentage of women in engineering is proving to be quite formidable and more focused multi-faceted approaches are needed if the desired progress is to be achieved. **This will require involvement of government, universities, communities, family and peers.** It is therefore not surprising that early in 2008 the Polytechnic of Namibia, in addition to all its other efforts, took the initiative to launch the **Women in Engineering Society.**

The Women in Engineering have been running a number of workshops and projects and a few examples of these are given below. That is:

- i. Introducing engineering to the girl-child at high schools in and around Windhoek and Rehoboth;

- ii. Instigating a Women in Engineering Day as part of the celebration of the International Women's Day;
- iii. Women in Engineering running educational programmes, in partnership with five departments of the City of Windhoek and funded by UNESCO, on good sanitation habits and water household purification as part of promoting sustainable development in informal areas.

The work of the Women in Engineering Society did not remain unnoticed and in 2009 the organisation was received the SNIEDA award in recognition of their excellent contribution (Sam Nujoma Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Award).

Let me congratulate the students for their excellent presentations. These were quite interesting and informative and they reflect the extent to which the students have immersed themselves in these renewable energy projects.

Congratulations to the Women in Engineering Society under the leadership of Ms Smita Francis. The presentations that were made this morning are **an indication of the commendable efforts of the Women in Engineering Society, pushing the interest and support for female students to build a career in engineering.**

Of great importance is the area in which the Women in Engineering Society are doing innovative work, namely renewable energy which is also high in the national development agenda.

In fact, the **Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Institute (REEEI)** at the Polytechnic has been working closely with the **Ministry of Mines and Energy** in an effort that will culminate in the establishment of the **Namibia Energy Institute**, a body with a responsibility to coordinate and drive renewable energy and energy efficiency and other energy initiatives in the country.

Recognising the importance of promoting energy for sustainable development in Namibia, and the **opportunities for building capacity** in this field as well as to raise awareness about the importance of **increasing sustainable access to energy, energy efficiency, and renewable energy**, the Women in Engineering Society found this field being an appropriate vehicle for interesting and involving female students in engineering.

With this in mind, the Women in Engineering Society therefore developed a plan for promoting sustainable development in Namibia by using solar energy. Under the umbrella of this programme the Women in Engineering Society have **initiated a research project on design and fabrication of free standing solar street light. Initially these solar lights will be deployed on some parts of the Polytechnic Campus and at a later stage new innovations will be developed to light buildings as well as provide electricity to the laboratories.**

I am pleased that there is an intention to take this project to the communities, for example in the City of Windhoek solar energy will be promoted **through conversion of the Parliament Garden and Independence Avenue to a Green street powered solely by renewable energy.** The following progress is noted:

- a) The **exciting phase** of the programme will begin when the **project starts impacting on the lives of the people.** With **informal settlements** mushrooming at a very fast pace around Windhoek and **having streets without lights**, this project will avail **free-standing solar LED** lights that can be installed at any location.

- b) In the **second phase** of the project, **GPS tracking devices will be installed on the solar panels in order to minimise theft of these solar panels.**
- c) Finally, a **windmill will be incorporated in the design of the street lights to make provision for those rare cloudy rainy days in Namibia.** There is no doubt this development will make a difference in the quality of life of people in the informal settlements. The future can be *“renewable”* isn't it?

Director of Ceremonies, it would be amiss of me not to acknowledge and express our appreciation for the valuable partnership we have entered into with the FNB through this project.

Madame Katjivivi, the Polytechnic is indeed indebted to the FNB for the financial support you have provided to this unique research project.

Many a time development of innovative ideas with a potential to produce cutting-edge technologies are held back due to lack of funds, however it will not be so in this case. For that we are grateful to FNB and **we are looking forward to a productive cooperation in the future with you, and with many other stakeholders to build sustainable futures.**

I thank you.