



WELCOMING SPEECH

By

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*THE RECTOR OF THE POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA***

AT

**THE OCCASION OF THE
LAUNCH OF THE NAMIBIA ENERGY INSTITUTE**

ON

20 MAY 2014

**SAFARI COURT HOTEL
WINDHOEK**

Director of Ceremonies,
Minister of Mines and Energy, Honourable Isak Katali
Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Economics, Natural
Resources and Public Administration, Honourable Ben Amathila
Honourable Representatives of Government Ministries and the National
Planning Commission
Honourable Representatives of the Various Embassies, the various
Regions and Local Authorities
Representatives of the Energy Industry and other Stakeholder Industries
Esteemed Development Partners
Esteemed Academics and Colleagues
Distinguished Invited Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning!

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this auspicious occasion where we will witness the launch of the Namibia Energy Institute (NEI). This is essentially the evolution of the Renewable Energy and Energy Institute (REEEI), which by name implies concentration on renewables. The said institute was initiated in 1998 through the White Paper on Energy and was launched in 2006. The launch of the Namibia Energy Institute (NEI) today implies a comprehensive consideration of all energy issues and matters, including renewables.

A special word of welcome goes to the Minister of Mines and Energy, Honourable Isak Katali, whose Ministry has been the key supporter of the REEEI, and who will deliver the keynote address and launch the

NEI. I would also like to acknowledge Honourable Member of Parliament and Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Economics, Natural Resources and Public Administration, Mr Ben Amathila, whose Committee has made important contributions to the discourse on energy within Namibia.

And surely, I would like to acknowledge the key stakeholders and partners in the energy sector. I believe all of us can and should develop the energy sector together – with a united vision and concerted actions.

Ladies and gentlemen

We all know that every body motion requires energy input, be it living or mechanical. Every motion is an effort and whichever effort requires energy, a certain amount of energy, a measured minimum amount in whatever form – electrical, mechanical, and so on. Any input beyond this minimum is wasted. Therefore, for any development to happen, there must be sufficient energy. And this places a special responsibility on us as a developing nation - with an agenda of promoting accelerated socio-economic and technological growth and a growing population, but a fragile environment (for instance characterized by drastic weather conditions and desertification) – to manage energy resources efficiently and effectively with the best of intentions and solutions.

This we have to do in order to ensure that every citizen and corporation in this country has adequate energy to achieve their daily and life goals, thereby safeguarding the current and future generations a decent life.

As the saying goes, “if the shoe fits, you don’t notice it”, but if the shoe doesn’t fit well and it’s too tight, you will not be able concentrate on anything else, you can’t walk properly and you can’t sleep with it. That is for sure! So far the energy shoe has fit to some extent, but we’re at a point in history when the shoe is beginning to get too tight. In other words, it’s time for us to wake up and design a shoe that fits and expands as our foot and carbon footprint grows.

This we have to ensure because energy is one of the most critical resources in nature. So many countries have been invaded, so many governments have been overthrown, so many wars have been fought, and many more will be fought, and so many lives will be lost – all because of energy. Energy in the form of land, water and air (sun and oxygen for example) – which are natural sources of energy, and in other forms such as oil, gas, and nuclear fuels. Thus energy is a matter of personal security and well being and thus a matter of national security. Without adequate energy and security thereof, our nation will be relegated to the doldrums of under-development.

In his report, *The State of the Global Energy Supply*, Paul Alois, wrote for the Arlington Institute in September 2006 as follows:

“Today, over 80% of the world’s energy is generated by three fossil fuels: coal, oil, and natural gas. Modern society developed under the assumption that there would always be adequate supplies of these fuels, and today the global community is completely

dependent upon them.

In the coming century the two issues that will shape global energy policy will be peak oil and climate change. Oil supplies more energy than any other source, but it is a finite resource that will one day run out. It is a universally held belief among scientists that the burning of fossil fuels is causing global warming. Although the long-term effects are hard to predict, the world has recently seen an increase in droughts, heat waves, and catastrophic weather. From an economic standpoint it would be a disaster if oil peaked, but from an environmental standpoint it would be a disaster if it did not.

It is time to start thinking about new ways to power the developed world, and new ways to help the developing world advance out of poverty. Viable forms of alternative energy have been developed that give people the opportunity to generate electricity in their homes. With experimental technologies like cold fusion and zero point energy on the horizon, the possibilities for change are endless. Where there is a will there is a way. Today there is a way, one can only hope we find the will.”

I shall not dwell on Namibia's state of energy because I believe we know it well and the Honourable minister will elaborate on this matter in his speech. Suffice it to say that the aforementioned quotation is a call to action that is still valid today and universities and research institutes are well placed to engage society and find solutions.

The Polytechnic has been, and the new university of science and technology (also known as an applied university) will be committed to finding solutions in partnership with society. This is the purpose of creating the Namibia University of Science and Technology. And therefore it makes sense that the NEI is based at, and is associated with, our applied university.

In our context the establishment of the NEI is a key strategic step to consolidate all endeavours in the energy field which would, in turn, facilitate and support industrialisation and development in our country. This new Institute is set against a background of several energy challenges such as the rising electricity consumption and prices in Namibia, and an expected deficit in its electricity generation capacity from 2016 due to current growth forecasts of its electricity demand.

Case in point: Currently Namibia produces only about 35 % of her electricity needs. The other 65 % is being imported from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Mozambique. This electricity serves only about 0.65 million people, while the rest, about 1.6 million people rely on traditional energy sources such as firewood, and daylight.

Further, we import 100% of our petroleum needs: petrol, diesel and oil serving the nation for transportation, paraffin for cooking and lighting, and a little bit of liquid petroleum gas (LPG) as well for cooking. Such reliance on imports places Namibia in a position of vulnerability, where we are dependent on the goodwill of the people we trade with. This is not sustainable in the long run because political situations change over

time, and it is high time the country invest in energy for self-reliance and stability.

Director of Ceremonies

The energy challenge I have just alluded to is not unique to Namibia, but it is common to developing countries. For instance, according to a recent report¹ on the energy situation in Sub-Saharan Africa, each of these countries, namely Nigeria, Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of Congo has about 50 million people in their population without electricity. Interestingly, Sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa) produces 28 GW of power to serve almost a billion people - in comparison with Argentina which generates the same power for its 42 million people. Exacerbating the situation is that in the Sub-Saharan Africa on a daily basis a quarter of that power is unavailable due to inefficient deteriorating infrastructure.

It is therefore imperative that Namibia takes deliberate action to achieve the said goals, through investment in energy. The Namibia Energy institute is expected to play a leading role in advocacy for better management, and greater efficiencies and investments in the energy sector.

The approval of the transformation of the REEEI into NEI by the Government of the Republic of Namibia has thus expanded these possibilities and the scope of the new Institute. And this is in line with global developments in energy management: globally institutes and

centers are established – often in partnership with and at universities - to focus on, specialize in, and manage energy issues.

The new mandate allows for a holistic approach to capacity building, research and development of energy resources available to us – be it local or imported and renewable or non – renewable resources. It calls for capacity building and training of personnel in Namibia so that resource conservation and efficient utilisation can be an integral part of every resident's daily life. In the quest of achieving the former, standards will be adopted, and/ or formulated to ensure adequate quality of service delivery in the energy sector. Local testing and manufacturing is envisaged in the new knowledge economy, which advocates for low carbon and environmentally sustainable energy options.

It is in this regard that the Polytechnic – and by extension NUST - is well positioned to contribute to solutions on energy issues through sustained training and research. State-of-the-art testing and research facilities will be established in our endeavours, and one day NEI will be a more independent and autonomous institution.

Ladies and gentlemen

With these few words the Polytechnic thanks the Namibian government for the great vision to create the NEI, and for the Ministry of Mines and Energy and other stakeholders (esp. including foreign embassies and development agencies) for the wonderful support and collaboration over the years. We are very happy to welcome you all to this historic occasion. I therefore would like to introduce the Honourable Minister of

Mines and Energy – Honourable Isak Katali, and invite him to the podium for the keynote address and official launch of the NEI.

Thank you very much.

References

1. [http://www.greatachievements.org/greatachievements/ga_1_2.html\(1of3\)](http://www.greatachievements.org/greatachievements/ga_1_2.html(1of3))