



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INNOVATION

OPENING ADDRESS

BY

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DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INNOVATION

AT

**THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 20TH POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA CULTURAL
FESTIVAL**

ON

10 AUGUST 2015

AT

9.00

IN FRONT OF EHAUS

POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA

WINDHOEK

Director of Ceremonies

Rector of the Polytechnic of Namibia, Prof Tjama Tjivikua

Members of the Council of the Polytechnic

Distinguished Invited Guests

Senior Management, Staff and Students of the Polytechnic

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am greatly honoured and deeply humbled by the invitation to deliver the Opening Address at this joyous occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the Polytechnic Cultural Festival. Let me express my deep appreciation to the Rector of the Polytechnic, Prof. Tjama Tjivikua for extending the invitation to me. Often when one comes to institutions of higher learning, one is invited to academic activities, which are the core business of the institutions. However, coming to the Polytechnic this morning is special because while this event may not be surely academic, it truly reflects how the institution is embedded in our society. Therefore, I would like to thank you, for inviting me to this wonderful display of the different cultures of our country, where we are joined by friends from other parts of the world to share with us their own cultures. Cultural festivals have become one of the most effective vehicles for ensuring that our culture will strengthen our society. The reason for this is not too far to fetched – cultural festivals are wonderful celebrations that provide such a sweet atmosphere of happiness and enjoyment of our cultural diversity. Hence, traditionally they are a weeklong event full of traditional entertainment.

In the case of the Polytechnic Cultural Festival, which has now become a major colourful event in the calendar of our city, it manifests itself in terms of the kaleidoscopic Polytechnic students' parade; students' flea market; traditional dance performances from all our traditional groups in Namibia; the international cuisine; sports; fun games and competitions; gospel music shows; and the grand finale, the Miss and Mr Polytechnic pageant.

Today, as I often do, I am making a statement by the way I am dressed. I am also joining the Polytechnic of Namibia (PoN) in celebrating the kaleidoscopy that is the Namibian Cultural heritage. We need not always wear our own cultural dresses, but must at times wear each other cultural dresses to display unity in diversity and diversity in unity.

Director of Ceremonies, I would like to acknowledge and congratulate the Polytechnic on the historic achievement recently brought about by the passing of the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) Bill in the National Assembly, which signifies that the new institution will soon become the new Namibia University of Science and Technology as soon as this bill is gazetted. I am one of those people who have been watching these developments closely and I can testify that this institution has undergone tremendous transformations. I am cognisant of the intellectual and visionary leadership, hard work, persistence and understanding that the Polytechnic had to go through to reach this triumphant point at which the new institution is about to be born. Congratulations to all of you and particularly to Prof. Tjivikua and team, who worked tirelessly and passionately to ensure this was done, and the entire Polytechnic community for this momentous achievement.

Director of Ceremonies, five years ago, HE Dr Sam Nujoma, Founding President and Father of the Namibian nation made this statement at the Polytechnic Cultural Festival, ***“...culture is the backbone of any nation. A nation without culture is without a strong foundation. A nation rich in culture manifests a strong cultural heritage, which can be passed on to many generations.”*** I think we all agree with the words of wisdom are that at the centre of any nation that has its self-actualisation and pride is its strong cultural heritage.

I would like to commend the Polytechnic for having consistently staged this important cultural event. I have no doubt that a lot of time and resources go into organising an event of this magnitude, which also reflects the significance the Institution attaches to it. The participation of the students at this event is quite impressive and gives us great hope for the future. While students come to universities to acquire knowledge and

skills, the university life also provides them with opportunities to acquire social skills which empower them to function in society, and extends their personal experience beyond the narrow confines of their communities. University life imbues every one of its members with the wonderful experience to *“live in an international world”*. The Cultural Festival is an appropriate platform for acquiring these multiple skills and I trust that such skills acquired shall be applied in our daily interaction with others.

Director of Ceremonies

The theme the Institution has selected for the Festival, namely ***“Strengthening our identity to celebrate cultural diversity,”*** is indeed fitting and it resonates well with the statement made by HE, Dr Hage Geingob the President of the Republic of Namibia at his inaugural address in March this year when he said that, ***“After Namibia’s independence was secured, we needed to develop a new narrative for an independent country that had been fractured by apartheid. We had to overcome the hatred of the past - hatred between blacks and whites, and between different linguistic and ethnic groups. We focused on reconciling Namibia to ensure peace. We succeeded in building a reconciled society.”***

I have no doubt that celebrating our cultural diversity has been one of the main building blocks in establishing our national identity and has ensured us peace. It therefore, makes sense that strengthening our identity by celebrating our cultural diversity remains our best assurance of a reconciled society.

Ladies and gentlemen, in conclusion, next year, I look forward to seeing some Hereros and Kavangos dressed in Musisi, and Zambezi in Ondelelas and Ovambos in Herero dresses; and / or Nama/Damara dresses etc.

Let me again thank you for inviting me to this important occasion. Allow me also to wish you a happy 20th anniversary. I trust that you will have a fantastic week of cultural festivities. Enjoy the many diverse cultural and traditional performances, which display our rich cultural heritage.

I thank you for your kind attention!