



POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA

SPEECH

BY

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RECTOR: POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA

AT THE

NAMURBAN PROJECT LAUNCH

ON

01 OCTOBER 2015

AT

11:00

RESIDENCE OF THE FINNISH AMBASSADOR

3 BRUCE STREET, KLEIN WINDHOEK

Director of Ceremonies

Your Excellency, Mrs Anne Saloranta, *Ambassador of Finland to Namibia* and
Mr Kari Saloranta

Dr Minna Keinänen-Toivola and Captain Heikki Koivisto, both *Project Managers of*
Satakunta University of Applied Sciences

Dr Samuel John, *Dean of Engineering at the Polytechnic of Namibia*

Distinguished Academics, Personalities and Businesspeople

Members of the Media

Director of Ceremonies

Today is, without a doubt, an important day in academic collaboration between Finland and Namibia. It is so because it marks the commencement of a unique project, the **NAMURBAN** Project (*urban resource efficiency in developing countries using Namibia as the pilot country*) between Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (SAMK) and the Polytechnic of Namibia (PON), and the Finnish Environmental Institute (SYKE). Incidentally, the third edition (3/2015) of the AMK-Lehti // Journal of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences, front cover carries a picture which captured the signing ceremony of the agreement between SAMK and the Polytechnic of Namibia, with both Rector's and the respective Ambassadors.

As you are probably aware, our two universities have been implementing a co-operation agreement on issues relating to land and marine / maritime matters since 2012. The focus of the cooperation has been R/V Mirabilis and maritime education. In May 2015, SAMK and the Polytechnic of Namibia entered into a deeper collaboration phase on mutually beneficial research and teaching opportunities. This project is the beginning of further successful joint efforts between Namibia and Finland. It is, therefore, my honour and privilege to address you at this launching ceremony and commencement of the NAMURBAN Project.

I would like to specially thank Her Excellency Madame Anne Saloranta, the Ambassador of Finland to Namibia, who has been very supportive of this project and many others. We appreciate her efforts and effectiveness, the efficiency of the Embassy of Finland and Finnish institutions, and the generosity of the Finnish people through their government. In this process, I would also like to acknowledge in absentia, the Namibian Ambassador to Finland, His Excellency Mr Bonny Haufiku for the role he played during the signing of the partnership agreement between the two institutions in Finland.

This launch takes place just six days after our Minister of Higher Education, Training and Innovation, officially announced the gazetting of the ***Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST)*** Act. This announcement effectively means that the Polytechnic has finally been conferred a *university status*, or rather affirmed as a *technological university*, and the name will come into operation as soon as the commencement date of the Act is announced by the Minister.

Indeed, the mandate of NUST, as spelled out in its law, fully supports the NAMURBAN initiative. The university's mission clearly rests in the following:

- "(a) to contribute to knowledge creation and advance knowledge through teaching, research and scientific investigation, with an emphasis on applied research;
- (b) to support and contribute to economic and social development through globally relevant, professional, technological and career-focused higher education, and effective community engagement, with an emphasis on industry involvement;
- (c) to drive, promote and facilitate technology development and technology transfer and innovation and diffusion;
- (d) to engage in national and international partnerships and cooperation with other universities, organisations and institutions;

- (e) to preserve and promote the traditional and constitutional principles of institutional autonomy and academic freedom in the conduct of its internal and external affairs (subject to this Act and other laws)."

The Polytechnic of Namibia, and the new University, are no strangers to innovation and technology transfer. Our university has sufficient capacity to realise the goals of the NAMURBAN project through our Faculties of Computing and Informatics, Engineering, Health and Applied Sciences, Human Sciences, Management Sciences and Natural Resources and Spacial Sciences, as well as our Centres of Excellence, are structured conscientiously to respond to the national development agenda, that is, to make a distinct and visible contribution to our national development imperatives and processes. About land management and urban planning, for instance, our university provides an array of relevant qualifications, viz. architecture, engineering (civil, electrical, electronic, industrial and mechanical), town and regional planning, land surveying, geomatics, geoinformation technology, land administration, and property studies.

Allow me also to highlight some of the initiatives that speak to our engagement in innovation and sustainable development:

- (1) a business innovation centre (established in 2010 and funded by the Finnish government, since 2006, which to some extent hosts the Southern Africa Innovation Support (SAIS) Programme;
- (b) the Fabulous Fabrication Laboratory for high-tech design and prototyping;
- (c) the Namibia Energy Institute (NEI), which leads national initiatives in sustainable energy generation and supply;
- (d) the Namibian-German Centre for Logistics, which leads national initiatives in logistics, transport and supply chain management; and
- (e) the Integrated Land Management Institute (ILMI), which addresses the critical issue of land management with cutting edge solutions such as the *"Land, Livelihoods and Housing"* Research Programme. Just six weeks ago, we hosted a *Public Forum and Panel Discussion on Namibia's Urban Future*, which engaged several experts and stakeholders, including the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development and the City of Windhoek.

The NAMURBAN project, with funding from Tekes and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, forms part of Finland's BEAM - Business with Impact – programme which focuses on innovative technology, and meeting the needs of developing countries, and, in turn, provides Finnish companies with new business opportunities in growing markets. Innovation ideas involve technological services and business or social innovations.

The specific areas of **NAMURBAN** are based on the *analysis of the current needs for urban technology and communication systems improvement in Namibia*. The priority areas of the project are **logistics, tourism, manufacturing and agriculture**, which are in line with the national guiding documents such as Vision 2030 and Namibia's fourth National Development Plan (NDP-4). These plans strive to *increase income equality, employment creation, and high and sustained economic growth*. This research will be the first to study and develop a sustainable technological concept on urban environments in developing countries, showcasing our coastal town Walvis Bay as the pilot site.

Director of Ceremonies

Large scale urbanisation and rapidly growing markets require extensive investment in infrastructure (including ICT- and mobile technologies), water, energy, and food production processes. Namibia faces a difficult challenge in urban development due to the large number of informal settlements, extreme water scarcity, and dependency on imported energy. This is coupled with the fact that we have one of the world's most unequal income distribution economies. Similarly, the urban development balance is very fragile as the population is growing at a rate of 2.5% per year, and in some cities even 4% per year, thanks partly to migration. Therefore further urban challenges are huge numbers of unemployed people, primarily the youth, low education levels, and a lack of sufficient skilled labour in most economic sectors.

Finland is also a country with its own challenges such as its extreme weather conditions and long distances between cities. But Finnish companies have capitalized on these challenges and have strong know-how and competence in areas such as: affordable and energy efficient construction, energy production and water processes, as well as ICT-solution development. Hence, this partnership presents mutual beneficial possibilities for Finnish and Namibian companies in long-term business collaborations and national development.

The project envisions the following: A practical model for an urban resource efficiency concept, which participating companies can further develop together with local actors into a commercial product. *In Walvis Bay, this concept would enable the formation of new local business and the regeneration of existing ones, e.g. in the fields of mobile services, transport, installation, energy production and manufacturing. New and developing businesses in the above-mentioned sectors and an integration of local co-operation partners into the supply chain are key elements for a successful implementation of the concept.*

The resource efficient innovations, capacity building, and sustainable development for infrastructure and knowledge from pilot sites will be scaled, adapted and transferred to other sites in Namibia and other Sub-Saharan countries the SADC (Southern Africa Development Community) region. The recently established status of the Polytechnic's **Namibia Energy Institute** as well as the **SADC Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (SACREE)** to be based in Windhoek, will embark on related research, capacity development, business and employment creation will further facilitate this purpose.

The Polytechnic's emphasis on *innovation and technology transfer*, strives to improve the living conditions of people through the pursuit of applied problem-solving research. Thus, the Institution is planning to establish further centers of excellence like those at SAMK, especially in water research and resources development. Overall, resource efficiency in urban development is the key to successful economic and social development while ensuring the minimization of the negative effects to the environment.

Finally, Director of Ceremonies

The town of Walvis Bay offers itself to the developing world as a laboratory for sustainable development. Indeed, we shall be the first partners to study and develop a sustainable technological concept on urban environments in developing countries. The solution being an optimized and cost effective urban resource efficient concept designed for developing countries' environment.

We are forever thankful to Finland for this unique, special opportunity, and also our partners SAMK and the SYKE. The potential of a project of this nature for the higher education sector is enormous. Universities have several responsibilities to society, and therefore, NUST will play an active role in knowledge sharing and dissemination of the project results amongst local and regional academic fraternities, the business sector and decision makers, and civic society.

Thank you and we are looking forward to further successful collaboration, not just through this project, but also through many more to come!