



SPEECH

BY

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RECTOR: POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA

AT THE

20th CULTURAL FESTIVAL

09:00

10 AUGUST 2015

WINDHOEK

“Strengthening our identity to celebrate cultural diversity,”

Master of Ceremonies, Ms Emily Brown

Honourable Dr Becky Ndjoze-Ojo, *Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Training and Innovation*

Ms Evelyn Breuer, *Chairperson of the Polytechnic Council* and Other Members of the Polytechnic Council

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Ms Frieda Shimbuli, *Dean of Students*

Faculty and Staff of the Polytechnic

Members of the SRC, Polytechnic Choir and Cultural Clubs

Students of the Polytechnic and Visiting Pupils from High Schools

Distinguished Invited Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Twenty years ago this time of year, we gathered on this campus to celebrate a unique event – the Annual Cultural Festival. The young ones – the students - who mostly celebrated that occasion with us are now all, or nearly all, parents and some are grandparents. Surely, some of you, students, are reliving your parents' history and propelling the event into perpetuity. After all, there is no reason why it should stop. Once again, we are here to celebrate yet another year of achievements: of national identity, peace, tranquility, and unity, on which we shall build our future. Thank you all for giving meaning to this event.

According to a general definition, a festival or gala is an event ordinarily staged by a community, centering on and celebrating some unique aspect of that community and its traditions, often marked as a local or national holiday, mela or eid.

Festivals often serve to meet specific purposes, especially in regard to commemoration and/or thanksgiving. They are associated with celebration and may also provide entertainment, which was particularly important to local communities before the advent of mass-produced entertainment. These celebrations offered a sense of belonging for religious, social, or geographical groups. Festivals that focus on cultural or specifically ethnic topics also seek to inform members of their traditions and the involvement of community elders sharing stories and experience provides a means for unity among families. (***Wikipedia***, accessed on 09/08/2015)

A festival is a special occasion of feasting or celebration, and surely, this year, as in the past, you we shall celebrate individual and collective cultural features and achievements and shall indulge and enjoy the variety of foods and cuisines on offer in Namibia and elsewhere.

This week the nation's attention is on the Polytechnic, and we shall not hesitate to impress with variety and style as is tradition. Last Saturday, if you were downtown Windhoek, you would not have missed the massive parade that put the traffic and crowds of people on hold from their normal flow and routine activities. I personally was stuck in traffic for a

considerable time and marvelled at the students' creativity, enthusiasm and energy. Congrats for a successful float!

The cultural festival is an occasion for us not only to play and laugh, but it is also a time for reflection and introspection, and for learning. In order to map the way forward a nation, and in order to celebrate the best we can offer, we ought to reflect and correct the our paths where necessary – where we went wrong, where we insulted and offended others, where we came short of our goals, and did not contribute effectively to societal harmony. Because, I'm sure often or sometimes in life, we need to interrogate ourselves in the many activities we undertake, in so many words we speak, and where we make mistakes to appropriately recognise the other individuals and groups and other nations. I'm saying this because as educated individuals, I expect all of us to be culturally sophisticated and to effectively contribute to cultural harmony.

This year's festival, under the theme "***Strengthening our identity to celebrate cultural diversity,***" brings us joy when we see our students show their pride and take the lead to teach us all a number of things about organisation, cooperation, sharing responsibility, risk taking, and so on. Through this group event, students acquire valuable soft skills that will serve them a lifetime. Indeed, we thank the division of Student Affairs for the leadership they have provided to give meaning to this important event. And so the Polytechnic community and the public at large support them all.

Finally, I welcome you warmly to this event, and wish you success in your various activities. Do it to the best of your ability, excel at what you do. Make us proud and have a memorable time that will serve you well!