



**SPEECH BY**

**DR. TJAMA TJIVIKUA**

***RECTOR: POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA***

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE SIGNING OF A  
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU)  
BETWEEN THE POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA AND THE  
UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE**

**02 NOVEMBER 2010**

**POLYTECHNIC CAMPUS  
(SENATE CHAMBER, E- HAUS)**

Director of Ceremonies

Professor Neil Heideman, Dean: Faculty of Natural Resources and  
Agricultural Sciences

Colleagues from the University of the Free State

Polytechnic Colleagues

Media Practitioners

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted at this occasion of the signing of Memorandum of Agreement between the Polytechnic of Namibia and the University of the Free State. Cooperation agreements are important in that they bolster partnerships through the harmonization of strengths and synergies between institutions, and create new opportunities and solutions.

We view partnership in Agricultural Sciences as a means of creating, developing and distributing new knowledge in order to advance research, developing new talents, new technologies, and deploying new products for the benefit of both large and small-scale producers and markets, as well as resource-poor farmers and other marginalized social groups in our country and beyond.

The Polytechnic of Namibia is proud to be associated with the University of the Free State, an outstanding university - 106 years old - with a track record that speaks volumes. In 1904 it started under the name of Grey College, and today it is a leading university in South Africa which boasts of a student population of 27 600.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it's a leading university in the SADC region.

Today about 70% of Namibians live in rural areas where they mainly depend on subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods. This country is characterized by only 1% of the land being arable due to an arid environment due to sporadic rainfall patterns leading to water shortages and poor soils. As a result, many rural people suffer from chronic food shortages and insecurity. This is further compounded by the fact that people concentrate on livestock farming and a communal land tenure system which in many parts of the country significantly limits access to credit. In addition, over the last few years Namibia has been the victim of recurring weather extremes, particularly drought and floods, which have further threatened food security and livelihoods.

Namibian agriculture - excluding fishing - contributed between 5% and 6% to the GDP for the past five years, and agricultural products like live animals and crop exports constituted roughly 5% of total national exports.

In the period 2007/2008, for example, beef exports under the Cotonou Agreement was one of the good foreign exchange earners accounting for about N\$ 2 billion.<sup>ii</sup> Unfortunately the contribution of agriculture to the GDP declined over the years due to weather conditions that have often destroyed crops in the north and north eastern part of the country. Lack of new investments in this sector has also held back potential GDP contributions.

As a result of the aforesaid and the lack of innovations in the agricultural sector, Namibia imports more than 90% of foodstuffs and 100% agricultural implements, mainly from South Africa. This alone is evidence that there is

very little going on in terms of research and agribusiness and agritech development to try and reduce this trade imbalance and achieve self-sufficiency.

Therefore, we at the Polytechnic realized the need for comprehensive land management training since the Technikon days. By combining the related specializations of land management, agriculture, nature conservation, community-based natural resource management and tourism, the Polytechnic has been a key education and training partner in this critical area, and is indeed, a leader in Land Management education in Southern Africa. Today, more than 1 100 students are enrolled in the School of Natural Resources and Tourism where we offer Certificates and Degrees in Community-based Natural Resource Management, Agriculture, Nature Conservation, Land Management and Registration, Land Valuation and Estate Management Land Use Planning, Geo-Information Systems (GIS), Land Surveying, Geo-information Technology, Geomatics, and Property Studies. In addition, we offer a Master of Integrated Land Management, and offer services – training, consultancy, etc - through our Institute for Integrated Land Management (ILMI). Indeed, we are proud to have established a Centre of Specialization in Land Management which is serving the SADC region. The Polytechnic is thus very proud to be playing its part in building capacity in land management for the public and private sectors, and individuals locally and in the sub-region.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The cooperation between our two institutions was guided by our first five-year Memorandum of Understanding which was signed in 2005 and which

expired last August. Some of the activities that were carried out under that MOU were:

1. Assistance from the University of the Free State in the development of an Honours Programme in Agricultural Management;
2. Joint consultancies conducted for the Meat Board of Namibia;
3. Joint short courses funded by FNB, Agribank and Meat Board;
4. Joint presentations at various international conferences; and
5. Visiting guest lecturers from the University of the Free State.

All these activities were carried out professionally and to the satisfaction of stakeholders, and I thank my colleagues and the staff of UOFS for a job well done. But our relationship is deeper than the activities presented: 40% or four out of the ten faculty members in our Department of Agriculture obtained either their Master or PhD qualifications from the University of the Free State.

Once again, I want to assure our partners at the University of the Free State as well as other stakeholders that we are fully committed to aligning our educational goals, research objectives, and training strategies and programs, and services, to global best practices and standards. We take pride in equipping our graduates to deliver effective, modern and innovative agricultural and land administration systems and management expertise. We also take pride in delivering quality multi-disciplinary services to our Namibian stakeholders and the international community. The

Memorandum of Agreement we are signing today thus encapsulates and further advances these ideals.

Today, I believe our two universities – the Polytechnic of Namibia and UOFS - will go a long way in contributing to the production of a critical mass of agricultural economists, agri-business managers, technical and scientific workers that would be needed to turn our agricultural production and business landscape around.

The Agreement, which will run over a period of five years (2010 – 2015), covers a wide range of activities which can briefly be broken down as follows:

1. New Academic Clusters in Water Management and Sustainable Agriculture;
2. Joint Research;
3. Joint Curriculum Development;
4. Student and Staff exchanges
5. And joint delivery of workshops and seminars.

This MOU creates a medium for distributing academic knowledge, and developing technical skills and competences, and new technologies, thus increased and sustainable economic growth; optimal and sustainable utilization of renewable and non-renewable resources; environmental sustainability; innovative and productive usage of technology; and adequate supply of qualified, productive and competitive labor force.

Finally, our sincere gratitude to our partners at the University of the Free State - those who are here and those who aren't. And please convey our heartfelt gratitude to the Vice Chancellor for the willingness to cooperate and for giving his support to this partnership. I thank you all for the kind attention!

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#### REFERENCES

<sup>i</sup> Wikipedia.org (accessed on 01 November 2010).

<sup>ii</sup> Namibia Economic Policy Research Unit (NEPRU), *Namibia: Economic Review and Prospects*, 2009/2010.