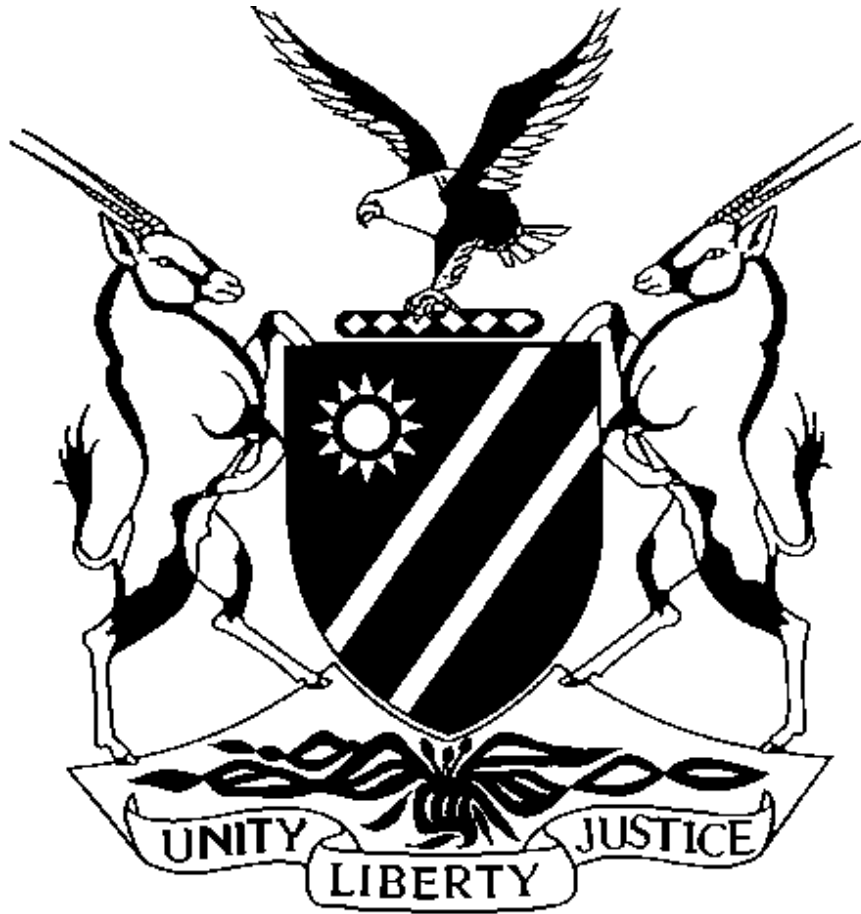


REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY
HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBA, PRESIDENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 16th GRADUATION
CEREMONY OF THE POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA,**

TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION

14th OCTOBER 2011

WINDHOEK
**Check Against Delivery*

**Director of Ceremonies and the Rector of the Polytechnic of Namibia, Dr Tjama Tjivikua,
Honourable Ministers,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Chairperson of the Council of the Polytechnic of Namibia, Mr. Niilo Taapopi,
Esteemed Dr. Helena Ndume, Guest Speaker,
Esteemed Chief Executive Officer of the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund,
Distinguished Members of the Council of the Polytechnic of Namibia,
Esteemed Faculty
and Staff of the Polytechnic of Namibia,
Distinguished Invited Guests,
Dear Graduates,
Members of the Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Six months ago, I attended the first instalment of the 16th Graduation Ceremony of the Polytechnic of Namibia, during which a total number of 1317 students graduated in a number of disciplines. I am therefore delighted to be part of this second instalment of the 2011 Graduation Ceremony of the Polytechnic of Namibia.

At the onset, I would like to congratulate you, the graduates, on your academic achievements which, without doubt will continue to enrich your lives and open up new opportunities in the coming years.

Director of Ceremonies,

The Government of the Republic of Namibia puts high premium on education. It is for this reason that we have identified education as one of the priority sectors in the development of our country. In 2006, we launched the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP) to enhance the education and training sector's contribution to the attainment of strategic national development goals, and to facilitate our nation's transition to a knowledge –based economy. In this context, we are also paying attention to tertiary education.

During the current Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) period, 3.5 percent of the education budget has been allocated to higher education compared to 2.8 percent over the past decade.

In June this year, Government hosted a National Conference on Education under the theme, “*Collective Delivery on the Education Promise: Improving the Education System for Quality Learning Outcomes and Quality of Life.*” The overall aim of the Conference was to provide a platform for all stakeholders to interrogate the education system in Namibia and contribute towards improved learning outcomes at all levels of education.

The Government, through the Ministry of Education, is currently working hard to take the recommendations from the National Conference on Education forward.

Director of Ceremonies,

In the 2011/2012 National Budget, job creation has been highlighted as one of the important priority areas to fight poverty and improve the living conditions of our people. We have, as Government set ourselves a target to create 104,000 job opportunities over the next three years, through the *Targeted Intervention Programme for Employment and Economic Growth (TIPEEG).*

Towards this end, Government has allocated an amount of N\$14.6 Billion for the implementation of TIPEEG. However, without economic growth, it will remain difficult for Namibia to create jobs. Therefore, in order for Namibia to create a knowledge-based economy, it is vital that more planning and resources should be directed at the creation and application of knowledge and new technologies that harness Namibia's rich natural endowment.

One of the major impediments to productivity and economic growth is the shortage of skilled workers. Here in Namibia employers have raised concerns that the shortage of qualified artisans and technicians is a critical constraint on increasing their productivity.

I am informed that there is also a shortage of qualified staff at other higher levels in our economy, especially business managers, engineers, medical doctors, researchers and other professionals required to provide technical leadership in the country's quest to intensify the creation and application of knowledge to improve productivity.

Director of Ceremonies,

When the Polytechnic came into operation in 1996, the student population stood slightly over 2 000. Today, I am informed that the 2011 enrolment figure stands at about 12,440. I commend the Polytechnic of Namibia for rising up to the challenge of access to higher education through continued growth and expansion, facilitating access to many of our youth and adults alike. I have no doubt that the skills that these students acquire at the Polytechnic and other institutions of higher learning as well as at vocational training centres across the country will go a long way in helping us to address the challenge of unemployment.

However, I am concerned that the Tracer Study on Graduates from Higher Education Institutions, which as commissioned by the National Council for Higher Education, covering the period 1998-2008, only about 1 percent of graduates from our tertiary institutions are self-employed.

I am equally concerned that, according to the same study, 10 percent of the graduates are unemployed. In this light, I believe our education system should be designed to prepare our students to become self-employed and job-creators instead of job seekers after they graduate.

Director of Ceremonies,

I find the theme for this year-“*Towards Sustainable Innovation*” very appropriate. Sustainable innovation is a call to address some of the world’s most difficult problems, from climate change, and environmental degradation, to poverty, diseases and the sustainable use of resources.

Much of humankind is vulnerable to natural disasters, extreme poverty, infectious diseases and host of other challenges. As the world population grows, human activity is straining the planet’s resources, threatening the health of our environment and ability to thrive.

One of our NDP3 goals is *Environmental Sustainability*. Human activities generate pressures and often adverse impacts on the environment. The interventions by all stakeholders should, therefore, protect the environment from over-exploitation to avoid irreversible environmental degradation. Hence the need for assessments of planned developments, including their cumulative impacts on the environment

These are the issues which hinge on sustainable innovation and which institutions such as the Polytechnic of Namibia should conduct research on.

At the same time, all these issues impact on our people especially those engaged in agriculture and livestock production, forestry and fishery. Integrated Sustainable Land Management (ISLM), which our Government has adopted as a policy, is a strategic approach that aims to achieve both sustainable development and poverty alleviation through prudent utilisation of natural resources. It facilitate the adoption of practices that prevent resource degradation and desertification as well as rehabilitation of already degraded ecosystems.

Namibia also faces the challenge of increased urbanisation and the growth of informal settlements. The Local Authorities, which are tasked with the responsibility of providing basic services such as water, waste removal, energy and land use planning, do not have the necessary capacity. However, waste minimisation programmes such as recycling and re-use, particularly in bigger municipalities such as Windhoek and Walvis Bay should be encouraged. The formulation of effective legal instruments should also be accelerated and adequate baseline information on the overall impact of pollution on the environment and human health needs to be researched and assessed.

I am pleased to note the Polytechnic's continued support to the Ministry of Lands and Resettlement through the integrated Land Management Institute (ILMI) in the School of Natural Resources and Tourism with regard to land use planning, land allocation, tenure and related issues.

The Polytechnic has also done valuable work in promoting community-based tourism and rural conservancies. In addition, it is pleasing that the Polytechnic provides training services to the small-scale irrigation farmers in the Northern Communal Areas (NCA), with the view to enhancing small-scale farmers' livelihoods by exposing them to sustainable commercial farming practices. This training is conducted within the framework of the Government's Farmers Support Project (FSP). I look forward to the intensification of those efforts to benefit many more rural communities. We expect the Polytechnic to use its expertise, innovative capacity and drive to amplify these efforts and their outcomes.

In the same light, the working relationship between the Ministry of Mines and Energy and the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Institute at the Polytechnic of Namibia is commendable.

I am informed that REEEI and the Ministry of Mines and Energy have so far launched four (4) Energy Shops in Hardap, Ohangwena, Omusati and Oshikoto regions while Energy Shops for the remaining regions will be launched before the end of the current Financial Year. The shops are part of the Off-grid Energisation Master Plan with the objective to increase energy access to marginalised communities. They will stock and sell appropriate renewable energy and energy efficient technologies.

Director of Ceremonies,

I am informed that 476 students are graduating here today in 110 different qualifications programmes across six schools/faculties, such as Business and Management; Communication; Engineering; Health and Applied Science; Information Technology and Natural Resources Management and Tourism. Out of that total, I am told that 246 are female and 223 are male. The total number of the Polytechnic of Namibia graduates for 2011 now stands at 1793, making this Graduation Ceremony yet another milestone in the history of the Polytechnic of Namibia.

As I mentioned earlier, our Government is continuously increasing its contribution to the education sector, including the support given to tertiary education institutions. We expect them to utilise these resources for the benefit of our nation.

I urge the business community, especially the key sectors such as mining, fishing, commercial agriculture, tourism and the financial sector. All of us as Namibians, should join hands to make Namibia's education sector the best that it can be.

Once again, I say congratulations to all our graduates. I wish you success in all your future endeavours.

Long live the Republic of Namibia

I thank you.