



**POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA**

**SPEECH BY**

**MR. NILO TAAPOPI**

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**AT THE**

**16<sup>TH</sup> GRADUATION OF THE POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA**

***“Towards Sustainable Innovation”***

**14 October 2011**

**Safari Hotel and Conference Centre**

**WINDHOEK**

Master of Ceremonies and Rector of the Polytechnic, Dr. Tjama Tjivikua

Your Excellency, Dr Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of

Namibia and the Chancellor of the University of Namibia

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Fellow Council Members

Dr. Helena Ndume, Our Guest Speaker

Esteemed Administrators and Scholars

Dear Graduates

Representatives of the Media

All Protocol observed

Ladies and Gentlemen

Please allow me to avail myself of this opportunity to extend to you, on behalf of Council and Management of the Polytechnic, our cordial welcome to this 16th Graduation Ceremony of the Polytechnic of Namibia – a year in which we have selected the theme “***Towards Sustainable Innovation***”. I greet you this afternoon and offer my sincere congratulations to each and every graduate of the Polytechnic

of Namibia. My fellow Councillors and I are, indeed, very happy to share in your joy this afternoon.

I think before we talk about ***Sustainable Innovation***, we need to understand what *sustainable development* is. *Sustainable development* can be defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.<sup>1</sup> This implies that all we need to do is see the world as a system – a system that connects space, resources and time. It is a pattern of resource use that aims to meet human needs while preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for generations to come. Therefore, the concept of *sustainable development* is rooted in systems thinking, a methodology that helps us understand ourselves and our world. The problems we face are complex and serious – we cannot address them in the same way we created them. But we can address them.

I also believe that in talking about ***Sustainable Innovation***, we need to actually talk about what experts call ***eco-innovation***. “...Eco-innovation is the creation of novel and competitively priced goods, processes,

systems, services and procedures designed to satisfy human needs and provide a better quality of life for all, with a lifecycle minimal use of natural resources (including energy, and surface area) per unit output, and minimal release of toxic substances. Eco-industry includes businesses across all sectors that are pro-actively involved in eco-innovation, including novel solutions to satisfy legally set standards, norms and requirements.”

We live in a world with a lot of natural disasters and other environmental challenges like climate change, deforestation etc. As an institution which places high premium on science and technology, I believe the Polytechnic of Namibia has the capacity to prepare knowledge workers who will help address some of these challenges. Given enough support from the industry and our Government, I believe more research can be carried out in the area of *sustainable innovation*. In this global village, what happens in any part of the world does affect us all. The outbreak of bird flu which triggered shock waves around the globe a few years ago is a good example. The effects of the 2011 earthquake in Japan might have forced that country to revise its development assistance to developing countries, for example. As the third-largest economy in the

world, Japan's GDP at US\$5.5 trillion accounts for 8.7% of global GDP.<sup>ii</sup> However, as a result of the earthquake more than 28,000 persons were reportedly killed or missing and the physical damage was estimated from US\$195 billion to as much as US\$305 billion.<sup>iii</sup> Certainly, this will have an impact on their development assistance, and it will affect us.

Given all these challenges, I want to remind you graduates, that you have gained knowledge, skills and some expertise to share and I am sure that as you enter the world today you will stand out in a class of your own as successful citizens in society. Citizens, who will, amongst other things, care about *sustainable development* challenges and drive *sustainable innovation*. As they say, knowledge is power and education is not only the key to success, but also the most important equaliser.

The Polytechnic of Namibia has demonstrated its good citizenship by entering into a funding agreement with the Embassy of Finland. In terms of this agreement, the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Institute (REEEI) received a grant of Euro 70 000 from the Embassy. The grant, which was given through the Local Cooperation Fund, will be used to support the launch of and promotion of Energy Shops under the

Off-grid Energisation Master Plan. At the same time, we also launched the Namibia Energy Efficiency Programme in Buildings (NEEP). This is a USD 859 000 project funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The project's objective is to promote climate change mitigation for improved efficiency in energy consumption and CO<sup>2</sup> emissions per household and square meter of building surface. I believe this is a good example of what *sustainable innovation* is all about.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We need to consider increasing our learning time, recruit teachers from the top talent for our secondary education institutions, set strong standards, hold educators and management accountable and provide twenty-first century vocational and academic education.

Master of Ceremonies,

Nations of the world go about the business of determining their destiny and forging strategies to ensure not only their survival but also their competitiveness in a fast-changing global market. The Polytechnic of Namibia, as a strategic partner, has always stepped to the plate to help drive Namibia's human resources development, and by so doing prepare the nation towards Vision 2030. And it is there for all to see.

The Polytechnic has gained recognition and relevance in the eyes of the Namibian society for its significant contribution to human resource development through the wide, yet relevant range of professional qualifications it offers in sought-after disciplines such as Architecture, Business and Management, Information and Communication Technology, Engineering, Health Sciences, Natural Resource Management and Hospitality and Tourism Management. All these have been developed in consultation with industry and other stakeholders.

In fact, over the years we have had open dialogue with all our stakeholders through different forums and it has become part of our transparent corporate culture. The Polytechnic of Namibia has recently been nominated as the winner of the Golden Key Award for the **Most Open and Transparent Public Institution in Namibia**. This was based on a study conducted by the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) from June to August 2011 and covering nine randomly selected institutions. This award clearly bears testimony to our transparency and openness. I would therefore like to sincerely thank our Government and all our stakeholders for the unwavering support over the years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Polytechnic of Namibia is an institution which has a tradition of excellence; thus it was not surprising that it scooped yet another important international award, the Commonwealth of Learning Award of Excellence for Institutional Achievement in Distance Education in 2010. This was in addition to the many awards which the institution has won over the years, like Public Management Review (PMR) Diamond Arrow



Award, which it won for the second time in a row, in the category of “Best Tertiary/Higher Education Institution in Namibia.”

In its quest for excellence in teaching and learning, the Polytechnic has also embraced partnerships with renowned institutions all over the world. We have more than eighty (80) international partnerships. In this regard, we recently launched the Intra-African-Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Academic Mobility Scheme Project. This is an EU programme that builds on the African Union’s Mwalimu Nyerere programme for Africa and brings additional funding, through the European Development Fund (EDF), to expand the programme. Our project was among the three projects that were selected in Africa by the Executive Agency mandated by the European Commission to implement this academic mobility scheme. It is funded to the tune of Euro 2.91 million to support some 160 mobility scholarships in eight universities across seven countries. This will mainly be at the Master’s degree and PhD level.

We also signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the US-based Tate Group to provide internationally recognised Microsoft courses to the general public through our Centre for Entrepreneurial Development (CED). In terms of that agreement, Microsoft will extend international recognition to all relevant courses offered by CED. It further makes provision for the parties to work towards the establishment of an Information Technology Academy (ITA) at the Polytechnic of Namibia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Having listed all these achievements, it is indeed saddening to note that every year we have to turn away many qualifying students because of oversubscription of our programmes. Sad as it is, it is also a clear testimony to the fact that our academic qualifications are in high demand, not only in Namibia but also within the SADC region and beyond. This attraction is not just owed to the fact that places at tertiary institutions are limited in Sub-Saharan Africa generally; it has also to do, and importantly so, with our selection of programmes, which are always conceived in cooperation with stakeholders in industry and government, and with the support from the members of our national and

international curriculum advisory boards. Equally too, the popularity of our programmes are also associated with the Polytechnic of Namibia, which has become a household name in Namibia and beyond our borders.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to conclude by praising the exemplary hard work and commitment of the Council, Management, Faculty and Students. Our determination to improve the quality of education through measured reforms has gone a long way to increase the profile of relevant market-driven qualifications and services in a flexible and responsive system of education and training.

Dear Graduates,

This moment is critical, full of promise, some apprehension, and surely the satisfaction of earning a qualification. I believe a major milestone of your professional lives has been completed today.

The onus now rests on you to look to the future and to put what you have earned at the Polytechnic into practice for the benefit of yourselves, your families, your country and humanity at large. I am confident that with the intellectual wealth bestowed upon you during your days at the Polytechnic, you will be able to face new challenges in life with vigour, determination, and success.

I wish you all assured success on this new journey. Remember that a life that is lived for self only is not worth living.

I thank you for your attention!

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## References:

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<sup>i</sup> [www.iisd.org](http://www.iisd.org) (accessed on 05 October 2011).

<sup>ii</sup> Japan's 2011 Earthquake and Tsunami: Economic Effects and Implications for the U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2011.

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid.