



POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA

WELCOMING REMARKS

BY

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ON

THE OCCASION OF THE SEMINAR ON “*TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE
TOURISM IN NAMIBIA: MANAGEMENT MODELS AND
TRENDS*”

09 JULY 2013

**POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA
WINDHOEK**

Director of Ceremonies

Deputy Minister of Environment and Tourism, Honourable Mr Pohamba Shifeta

Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain to Namibia, His Excellency Mr Carmen Diez

Your Worship, former Mayor of the City of Barcelona, Mr Jordi Hereu

The President of Olof Palme International Foundation, Ms. Anna Balletbo i Puig

Mr Ramon Serrat Mula, Lecturer of Tourism and Hospitality Education at the University of Barcelona

Esteemed Invited Guests, Respected Speakers and Stakeholders

Faculty Staff and Students

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am extremely delighted to welcome you all here to celebrate yet another major milestone in the history of Hospitality and Tourism training at Polytechnic of Namibia.

Let me acknowledge the presence of the Deputy Minister of Environment and Tourism, Honourable Pohamba Shifeta – we are honoured to have you deliver a keynote address at this occasion. Our warm welcome also go to His Excellency, Ambassador Carmen Diaz and the distinguished guests from the Kingdom of Spain.

To all, welcome and thank you for your accepting our invitation to participate in this second series of seminars focusing on the important subject of ***“sustainable tourism through contemporary management models and trends”***.

Indeed, trends and models have changed in Namibia and I would like to put this in the historic perspective. Looking at this modern infrastructure with a cool ambience, which was **inaugurated ten years ago on 23 October 2003**, it is evident that significant planning and specialized knowledge, hard work and considerable investment made this Hotel and Tourism School a reality. But it has very humble beginnings: Hospitality and tourism training began in 1990 as an initiative of the **Hotel Association of Namibia (HAN)**. The **Hotel Training Centre (HTC)** was established as a section 21 company with funding from HAN and the courses were offered at the **College for Out-of-School Training (COST) in Khomasdal**, with an

intake of about **15 trainees per year**. COST later became a part of the Polytechnic at its establishment. Few basic skills cookery courses were initially offered but these were soon supplemented by more basic skills courses due to the great need in the hospitality industry, such that a mobile unit was also created to take training into the workplace. The HTC continued to cooperate with and on the premises of the Polytechnic at its establishment in 1996.

Subsequently in **1998, the Polytechnic introduced tertiary education and training in hospitality and tourism**. The government's position was captured in the **1992 White Paper on Tourism, reaffirmed in the 1996 White Paper and Draft Tourism Policies, and in the first National Development Plan (1995-2000)**, respectively. Today, the **Department of Hospitality and Tourism** or alternatively the **Namibia Hotel and Tourism School** at the Polytechnic of Namibia is the only comprehensive higher education provider in hospitality and tourism, with an enrolment of about **300 students per year** from several countries and **graduating over 60 students with Bachelor degrees in the hospitality and tourism streams**. In addition, since **2008 the HTS has trained over 450 people from industry in specialised and internationally benchmarked cookery programmes**.

At this juncture, I need to acknowledge the support of the Namibian government and seed funding from the European Union to realise the foundation, kitchens, six rooms, classrooms and offices of this facility. Equally important is the long-term and broad support from USAID which added substantial value to our systems and qualifications. Indeed, we are grateful to all the support and various grants from the EU, and the governments of the USA, Spain, France, Finland and Switzerland, and Malaysia.

Specific to this occasion, with the support of the Spanish Grant, which acted as seed money to unlocked more money from our government, we embarked on **Phase II development, which constituted building additional 12 rooms, two computer laboratories, 13 offices, demonstration theatre, a swimming pool and gym, an additional restaurant and two additional boardrooms**: these were completed two years ago.

With the same grant two programmes in both hospitality and tourism were revised to ensure alignment of the curriculum to Namibia Qualifications Framework (NQF) and industry requirements and at the same time six students and six staff members spent time in Spain to study further and work in tourism and hospitality operations. The grant also funded local research and workshops run together with industry partners.

Just to emphasise the value of the **Spanish grant, two students have been selected to go to Spain as part of their industry attachment for the academic year 2013/2014.** This complements our on-going exchange programmes that give our students opportunities to visit and further their studies in countries such as **USA, RSA, Finland, Spain, Tanzania, Germany, France, Reunion, Malaysia,** to name just a few. Our success to date can be witnessed by the broadness of international engagement and the eagerness with which both our interns and graduates are absorbed by industry and abroad. **In summary, our hospitality and tourism programme is as international as tourism has become!**

Honourable Minister, Your Excellencies

You will agree that quality service improvement is a critical success factor in the tourism and hospitality industry everywhere. Quality service will remain critical as we continue to grow a vibrant and sustainable industry and gain recognition and reputation in the world. Fact is, we cannot achieve excellence in service without it being underpinned by consistent quality service inputs. It is that intangible, yet definable element of quality that determines whether we have created an experience that drives a customer away or repeatedly attract him/her back again and again.

And when we, the stakeholders in the tourism industry, look at our ratings as a destination it becomes even more compelling to raise the bar of our service. We want our visitors to love our country and enjoy the diverse experiences of its beautiful and exciting landscapes and experience a consistent service from touch down at Hosea Kutako International Airport to take-off.

Ladies and gentlemen, this seminar is another step in an ongoing long journey and we invite you to come along with us. No doubt there will be challenges, but the rewards will far outweigh the obstacles. Let us explore new ways, inventions,

innovations, solutions and models today, and let's add value to our society through service.

Once again, I would like to extend a heartfelt gratitude to you Honourable Deputy Minister for not only taking time to come and officially open this seminar, but for always believing in us and supporting us.

To your Excellencies, we extend our sincere appreciation for your steadfast efforts and support to contribute to the human capacity development in this important area of our economy.

To our friends from Barcelona, we are indebted to you for your reach experience in this sector, and for your insights and commitment to completing the tasks in this partnership on time and within budget.

Thank you all for coming and taking this step with us. It really brings solace to us to know that as we continue in this journey we are in friendship with the Namibian society.

And finally, I wish you fruitful deliberations. I thank you.

Ends.