



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

Key note address

by

Hon Dr. David Namwandi, MP

Minister of Education

At the National Consultative Workshop on the Development of the National
Research, Science, Technology and Innovation Programme

24 March 2014

Safari Court Hotel

Director of Ceremonies,
Hon Tom Alweendo, Director General of the National Planning Commission,
Prof Andre du Pisani, Chairperson of the National Commission on Research,
Science and Technology,
Dr. Eino Mvula, CEO of the National Commission on Research, Science and
Technology,
Representatives from Government Ministries and SOEs,
Representatives from the Private Sector,
Representatives from Non-Governmental Organisations,
Fellow Researchers and Innovators,
Distinguished Guests,
Members of the Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen;

Namibia just commemorate its 24th Independence on 21 March 2014. Please, join me in celebrating major achievements attained over the past 24 years. As a country, we have achieved much and we have matured in consolidating our democracy through putting in place institutions for good governance and targeted service delivery. As government, we acknowledged that there are still challenges facing our nation such as unemployment, poverty and inequality, which are hampering our quest of becoming a more prosperous nation that we aspire to be.

Addressing these challenges require all Namibian citizens, men and women alike, in order to achieve the overarching goal of our Vision 2030 which is “*A prosperous and industrialised Namibia, developed by her human resources, enjoying peace, harmony and political stability*”.

I would like to thank you for accepting our invitation to participate in this National Consultative Workshop on the Development of the National Research Science, Technology and Innovation Programme. I am pleased to note the presence of delegates from our neighboring countries, South Africa and Botswana, participants from the private sector, institutions of higher learning, civil society and government institutions. Your presence signifies the importance that you attach to the work of my ministry, in particular to the work of the development of the National Research, Science and Technology Programme, through which we intend to constructively tackle some of the challenges I mentioned earlier.

This workshop is designed to facilitate knowledge-sharing among national and international experts working in the field of Research, Science, Technology and Innovation. It also provides a unique platform for researchers, innovators and entrepreneurs to share their views and to assist in identifying the National Research, Science and Technology priority fields, taking into consideration other important national documents such as: the Industrial Policy; NDP 4; and Vision 2030.

Indeed, this platform will also give the scientific community the opportunity to discuss issues such as the challenges faced in the National Research, Science, Technology and Innovation sector, and the solutions needed to address them. The final deliverable of this workshop would be a national programme developed *by the people for the people*. Developed through a consultative process which is inclusive of all stakeholders, in order to ensure a common vision amongst all the actors, and obtain optimal utilisation of scarce resources by

safeguarding against duplication of efforts. No one should feel left out! I am informed that invitations were extended directly to many institutions and also to the general public through the print media. I thank the National Commission on Research, Science and Technology for this proactive initiative!

Director of Ceremonies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Government has long recognized the importance of Research, Science, Technology and Innovation as an engine for economic growth and development, hence the adoption of the national policy on Research, Science and Technology as far back as 1999 and the enactment of the Research Science and Technology Act, 2004. The implementation of these policies and legislative instruments has been rather slow which has resulted in a low level of investment in Research and Development in Namibia.

Vision 2030 is a clear, coherent, and well-articulated Guide, and it has served to frame the aspirations and ambitions of the Namibian people. It is envisioned that by 2030 Namibia will have an established network of modern infrastructure, and a critical mass of knowledge workers and small- and medium-scale enterprises contributing to at least 30% of GDP and towards the significant reduction in unemployment.

Vision 2030 mandates that the fourth National Development Plan (NDP4) “be forward-looking” thus having a strong Research, Development and innovation component. NDP4 has identified the challenges related to the low level of Research, Development and innovation. “It also acknowledges that the interaction between key actors – the State, research institutions and the private sector – in respect of innovation is minimal, while incentives for targeted

Research and Development for the introduction of new technology and the promotion of innovation, are non-existent.”

To address these challenges, a commitment has been made through NDP4 to increase Research and Development spending to at least 0.3% of the GDP. My approximate calculation tells me that this should amount to, roughly N\$ 300 million annually. This funding would have to be spent wisely to ensure that it makes an impact that can be measurable and sustainable.

Director of Ceremonies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The funding commitment will require various interventions that are critically to inculcate a research culture. One such intervention is the development of the implementation strategy in the form of the National Programme on Research, Science, Technology and Innovation - which is why we are here today.

The establishment of the Programme stems from the policy directives of the National Policy on Research, Science and Technology of 1999 and its legal anchorage is from the Research, Science and Technology Act of 2004. In terms of section 18 of the Research, Science and Technology Act: “The Commission must, once in every three years, prepare a national programme for research, science and technology for the following three years. The Programme must:

- set out the national direction on Research, Science, Technology and Innovation for Namibia
- review the state of Research, Science, Technology and Innovation in Namibia for the previous three years
- identify shortcomings and priorities for Research, Science, Technology and Innovation

- set out the Research, Science, Technology and Innovation projects and requirements for such projects of every organisation, institution or body in receipt of moneys from the Fund, and includes the Commission's observations and recommendations on such projects and requirements in view of the national policy
- set out the programmes and projects envisaged by the Commission to be undertaken by it or a council during the period covered by the national programme
- assess the previous national programme, “

Director of Ceremonies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

You have your task clearly cut out for you by the enabling legislation. In your deliberation, I want you to have, at the back of your mind at all times, that we are presented with the opportunity for the first time, to develop a coherent instrument that will enable Research, Science, Technology and Innovation to address challenges faced by our society. This three year Programme must seek to operationalise and instrumentalise that role in driving Namibia's economic development.

As already, pointed out by the Director General of the National Planning Commission, there are limitations in terms of availability of data and information on the Research, Science, Technology and Innovation landscape in Namibia, which have to be addressed during the implementation of the envisaged Programme. However, this should not stop us from proceeding with the development of the Programme and I would like to emphasise that the focus is not so much on where we are as a Nation today, but where we envision to be at the end of this Programme and at the end of NDP4.

There is no doubt that research plays a key role in accelerating development. Its impact strongly depends on the successful execution of projects with the view of utilizing their results for informing and influencing policy, applying them to obtain social and economic innovations that can lead to economic growth, and the improvement of the quality of life of people, and advancing the frontiers of knowledge. For research to fulfil its policy influencing or informing roles, contribute to economic growth, inclusive development and to drive innovation, it needs to be well grounded and of high quality. Thus leadership, funding, capacity building of researchers and institutions, and the capacity to utilize research findings, are key to its success.

You will agree with me that Namibia's prospects for improved competitiveness and economic growth would depend on how the country takes advantage of opportunities presented by Research, Science, Technology and Innovation. It is thus important for Namibia to strengthen its effort in accelerating its transformation towards becoming a knowledge-based economy, as envisaged in V2030. Being known as a resource-based economy, Namibia has a long way to go. This would require a concerted effort to seize opportunities presented by the modern sciences, in order to harness long-term and sustainable solutions, especially in areas of national importance.

The nation expects you at the end of this workshop, to formulate the National Research, Science, Technology and Innovation Programme that would address challenges and opportunities in the national innovation system by devising

appropriate interventions for an enabling framework in these policy areas, human resources and institutional framework.

Director of Ceremonies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The nation surely also wishes to see this Programme taking a proactive approach by forecasting future trends and thus employing interventions in viable research, science and innovation areas with a long term view. As you set out the priorities for this Programme, take into consideration the abundance of raw materials that lend themselves to advance our industrialization. Take into consideration what Research, Science, Technology and Innovation can do to improve our public transport and logistical infrastructure, how it can ensure reliable energy security and water supply for our future.

Director of ceremonies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Time is of the essence, and I urge you to work as swiftly as possible to produce this document, so that I can present it to Cabinet for approval, then table it in the National Assembly as soon as practicable. I look forward to a constructive workshop with active participation by all present, towards a result-oriented Programme that will ensure Research, Science, Technology and Innovation contribution to the sustainable growth of our country. It is now my pleasure to declare this National Consultative workshop on the Development of the National Research, Science, Technology and Innovation Programme officially open.

I thank you.