

Statement
By
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Chief Executive Officer
National Commission on Research, Science and Technology (NCRST)

International Conference on Emerging Trends in Networks and Computer
Communication (ETNCC) 2015

18 May 2015
Windhoek, Namibia

Director of Ceremonies,

Hon Tjekero Tweya, Minister of Information and Communication
Technology (ICT),

Prof Tjama Tjivikua, Rector, Polytechnic of Namibia

Prof Dharm, Sigh Jat, Organising Chair,

Mr. Den Sullivan, Cisco Systems,

Researchers and Innovators,

Distinguished Invited Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

I would like to thank the organisers of this Conference for inviting me to participate at the opening of the International Conference on Emerging Trends in Network and Computer Communication 2015, a conference that is expected to make a meaningful contribution to the development of Computer and Telecommunication industry in Namibia.

I am humbled to be invited to share with you, in my capacity as the CEO of the National Commission on Research, Science and Technology some exciting initiatives that are planned and being implemented in strengthening a national system of innovation that is robust and responsive to address the needs of our society. The NCRST would like to appreciate and recognise the efforts of the organisers in ensuring the successful

hosting of a Conference of this magnitude. Your initiative resonates well with what is being done at national level.

Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to elaborate and share with you, how this initiative fits very well with national efforts to establishing and strengthening a national system that promotes, develops, coordinates and informs research science, technology and innovation towards a knowledge-based society.

In March this year, the NCRST launched the three year National Programme on Science, Technology and Innovation for 2014/15 to 2016/17, which was approved by Cabinet and also tabled in Parliament. The NPRSTI sets out the national direction for the development of RSTI in Namibia and harness potential opportunities for Research Science, Technology and Innovation to meaningfully contribute to V2030. With that we have set ourselves as a nation tangible and ambitious targets, which we want to achieve by 2017. Five key strategy have been formulated to achieve the NPRSTI objectives which is based on the analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of research and innovation in Namibia and has been formulated to address the identified challenges. I would like to focus on three of them.

1. Priority 3: Promoting cooperation in research and innovation activities:

2. Priority 4: Disseminating scientific and technological knowledge:

3. Priority 5: Promoting innovation in the economic and social sectors:

Under the National Programme, ICT has been identified as one of the 15 thematic research priorities, an important technology enabler, focusing on software development and applications, integration of communication networks, data processing and security of information and systems looking for applications with high impact, ensuring that industry, public sector and society are equipped with the suitable information systems. Here, I would like us to learn from some innovative solutions such as those developed in Kenya (MPESA), Zimbabwe (E-Voucher), etc.

The objectives of NPRSTI would only be achieved through our collective effort, it is therefore important that we must make deliberate efforts and recognize the role of each stakeholder in the Science and Technology system. As students, researchers and lecturers, I would like to encourage you to obtain copies of the National Programme by visiting our offices or downloading it from our website.

Indeed, there are several exiting initiatives underway as part of the implementation of the National Programme on RSTI. This includes, the *National, Science, Technology and Innovation festival 2015 which will take place from 29 June to 3 July 2015 at the Windhoek Country Club*, with the aim of creating an awareness and interest in science, technology and innovation amongst young people; to showcase and encourage innovation and creativity. There are a number of exciting activities that are planned for the festival, these includes, Scientific Shows, Interactive Demonstrations,

Exhibitions and most importantly the National Science, Technology, Innovation and Engineering Awards - Professionals in the field will be awarded for outstanding achievements and contributions in research, science, technology and engineering development and promotion.

The NCRST will also be hosting the National Research Symposium (under the theme, Research weaving the future and beyond) to provide a platform for researchers to share and disseminate their research findings. There will also be a parallel session for Namibia-South African researchers who are recipients of the research grants under the Namibia-South Africa bilateral agreement. We will also launch a National Research Journal.

As an agency responsible for coordination, developing, promoting and also funding research, we are tasked with the establishment of the National Research, Science and Technology Fund as provided for in terms of Section 23 of RST Act, 2004. This has been done in 2014, and to date we have funded 57 research projects to the value of N\$ 14 mil. We are in the process of finalizing two calls for proposal (1) 2nd National Call for Research Groups with Capacity Building Component , (2) 3rd National call for PhD Research which we are concluding this month and will soon inform the recipients.

Today, we are presented with an opportunity to take advantage of the support that our policy makers are giving to us in order to harness the potential benefit of STI to solve our socio-economic challenges. The NCRST

has allocated N\$ 47 mil (36% of the NCRST budget for 2015/16) towards funding research and innovation. The NCRST will soon issue a call schedule for 2015/16, outlining the various funding windows to enable researchers and innovators to prepare themselves in advance. This would be available on our website.

We are aware that the funding for research and innovation is not at the level where it should be and that it is still below the NDP4 targets, we will continue to engage all stakeholders, particularly our policy makers as part of our effort to mobilize the resources required. This will require us to provide evidence that are necessary to support appropriate policy interventions. For this reason the NCRST in collaboration with the Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) will conduct National R&D and Innovation survey, this year, which allow future setting up of very specific targets as well as carrying out benchmarking studies comparing Namibia's RSTI policies and performance with those of other countries. We are also developing of an M&E framework for the NPRSTI which will have, strategies, indicators of implementation and performance targets.

Another initiative that the NCRST is embarking on is the formulation of National Strategy for Research Infrastructure. Inadequate research infrastructure has been identified as one of the key challenges hampering research and innovation in the country and there is a need for a comprehensive strategy that would ensure that we invest correctly, this shall include the development of appropriate ICT infrastructure to support

RSTI such as supercomputing, software and user platforms for networking of scientists and engineers.

In conclusion, I would like emphasise that all stakeholders in the Science, Technology, and Innovation are instrumental in shaping the Science, Technology and Innovation Landscape. Our institutions of higher learning has a role to play in mounting postgraduate and postdoctoral programme necessary to develop the critical mass of researchers in in the identified priority areas On our part as funding agency , we are in discussion with the Namibia Student Financial Assistance Fund (NSFAF) to develop joint programs to fund research fellowships for postgraduate students.

We should therefore harness collaborative effort among all stakeholders, supporting the creation of partnership, sharing the available resources, both human and infrastructure, together with the financial resources towards building a robust system of innovation.

I thank you.