

MEDIA RELEASE

TECH-STATIONS TO ACCELERATE SMME GROWTH AND DRIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Windhoek, Namibia – The National Commission on Research, Science and Technology (NCRST) in collaboration with the Ministry of Industrialization, Trade and SME Development (MITSMED) recently hosted representatives from various technology stations in South Africa at a meeting to discuss how Namibia could benefit from the establishment of technology stations, science parks and innovation hubs to foster technology development, stimulate innovation, and drive economic development.

Promoting linkages between Namibia and international institutions as mandated by its founding Act, the NCRST cemented a smart partnership with the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) of South Africa to foster the exchange of skills and expertise in the promotion of innovation and technology development. This was done through a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in September 2015 that allows the NCRST and TIA to support technology development and ensure that research outputs from higher education institutions are translated into products and services that demonstrate commercial potential. One of the first initiatives of this strategic partnership is to leverage on the available expertise in South Africa to set up Technology Stations that will drive the growth of Namibian SMMEs and promote economic development.

During the visit, the delegation met with various role players in the tech-space, especially industries relating to food/agro-processing, clothing and textiles, engineering and adaptronics.

Vincent Nowaseb, NCRST General Manager for Innovation and Technology Development, says that “one of the critical outcomes of the meeting held with industry and academics was the need for Namibian institutions to strengthen synergies to act in a coordinated manner in supporting industrial research, technology development and innovation in key economic sectors such as Agro-processing, Manufacturing technologies and Engineering.”

Head Office:

A ERF 490, Platinum Street • Prosperita, Windhoek **T** +264 61 431 7000 **T** www.ncrst.na
P Private Bag 13253, Windhoek **F** +264 61 216 531 **F** info@ncrst.na

Innovation Hub:

A Cnr Louis Raymond & Grant Webster Street **T** +264 61 431 7099
Olympia, Windhoek **F** + 246 61 235 758

This he says will create a cohesive environment between industries and academia and smoothen the integration of research outputs into industries.

The Ministry of Industrialization, Trade and SME Development forms an integral part in ensuring the sustainability and overall success of various Technology stations around the country. “It is crucial to bring together key stakeholders at macro, meta and micro levels to formalise a technical working relationship with TIA; which is important for the country in achieving the goals set out in the Industrial Policy and the Growth at Home strategy “, noted Tulimeyo Kaapanda, Programme Manager for Industrial Upgrading and Modernisation at ministry.

Technology Stations are established as partnerships between businesses, higher education institutions and government and are aimed at stimulating and accelerating the growth of Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) and start-ups through the interaction with experts at universities and vocational training centres. Technology stations provide access to world-class infrastructure and expertise that would otherwise not be available to innovators and entrepreneurs, thus enabling them to engage in technology innovation. The ultimate beneficiaries of Technology Stations are the clients who receive services to develop unique products, processes and services. Moreover, technology stations enable universities to be more responsive to the needs of business and society through providing relevant technology services to SMMEs and the industry at large.

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Issued by:

National Commission on Research, Science and Technology
Office of the Chief Executive Officer

Contact Person:

Ockert Jansen
Head: Corporate Communication and Marketing
Tel: 061 - 431 7050
Fax: 061 - 229 928
Email: ojansen@ncrst.na

About NCRST: (www.ncrst.na/about-us/background)

The NCRST was established through the Research, Science and Technology Act, 2004 (Act no 23 of 2004). The NCRST fosters excellence through knowledge and innovation by ensuring adequate coordination, monitoring and supervision of research, science and technology in Namibia. Our strategic themes are centered around 1. Operational Excellence, 2. Organizational Sustainability, 3. Strategic Partnerships and 4. Innovation Excellence. The NCRST further strives to provide direction and policy guidance to the research, science and technology innovation systems in Namibia.