



UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA SCIENCE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

2014

Address by

Mr John Sifani, General Manager: Innovation and Technology Development

On behalf of

The Chief Executive Officer

of the

National Commission on Research, Science and Technology

“Research, Science, Technology and Innovation for Development”

Director of Ceremonies, Mr. S. Shimboyo;

Dr. Frednard, Gideon Dean of Science;

Prof. Erika Maas, Director Academic Affairs;

Dr. Kuiri Tjipangandjara, GM Engineering & Scientific Services, NAMWATER;

Prof. Singh, Prof. of Physics & Chair 2nd Science Research Conference

UNAM Staff and Students

Fellow Researchers,

Distinguished Guests,

Members of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning,

It is my pleasure and a true privilege to participate today at this 2nd Annual Science Research Conference organised by the Faculty of Science here at the University of Namibia. This conference provides an opportunity to celebrate research through dissemination of information on research activities and findings by researchers. The National Commission on Research, Science and Technology is pleased to be associated with these types of initiatives.

The role of science, technology and innovation to national development has been recognised the world over. Modern economics of science grew out of three main issues: the contribution of science to the advance of technology, and hence productivity and growth; the scientific knowledge and issues related to the productivities of scientist, demand and compensation. In the case of Namibia, this has led to the adoption of the National Research, Science and Technology Policy already in 1999 which was followed by the enactment of the Research Science and Technology Act, 2004 (Act no 23 of 2004). Further, Vision 2030 sets the goal of Namibia becoming “*an industrialised country*” changing its status

from an upper-middle-income country to a high-income country. The fourth national Development Plan (NDP4) has identified the challenges related to the low level of R&D and innovation “R&D and innovation – which entail the commercially successful introduction or implementation of a new or improved product or process – are at a fairly low ebb in Namibia. To address these challenges and many other challenges facing the National System of innovation in Namibia, a commitment has been made through NDP4, to increase R&D spending to at least 0.3% of the GDP. The funding commitment would require to be followed by a number of interventions that are critically required to inculcate a research culture.

With the establishment of the NCRST, Namibia is presented with an opportunity to give research, science, technology and innovation its rightful place in Namibia’s socio-economic environment. Some important development in the RSTI system since the establishment of the NCRST include the formulation of the National Programme on Research, Science, Technology and Innovation and the establishment of the National Research, Science and Technology Fund.

In terms of section 18 of the Research, Science and Technology Act, 2004 (Act 23 of 2004), subject to subsection (2), the National Commission on Research, Science and Technology (NCRST), once in every three years, or at such other intervals as the Minister may determine, must prepare a national programme for research, science and technology for the following three years, or such other period as the Minister may determine. The National Programme on Research, Science, Technology and Innovation (NPRSTI) covering 2014/15 to 2016/17 is expected to be approved by Cabinet and tabled in parliament. The NPRSTI focuses on increasing science and technology financing; building research capacities and

technical skills; strengthening research and development infrastructure; creating an enabling policy and regulatory environment; promoting public understanding of science and technology as well as establishing and strengthening national, regional and international cooperation between stakeholders in RSTI.

The proposed areas of research under the NPRSTI cut across several sectors and include health; agriculture and fisheries; water; energy; geology and mining; indigenous knowledge; social sciences and humanities, logistics; environment and tourism; as well as the areas addressing enabling technologies which are manufacturing technologies, information and communication technology; biotechnology and space science.

The Research, Science and Technology (RST) Fund as reflected in the RST Act of 2004 has now been operationalized and is expected to be a vehicle through which commercial companies, industrial firms, banks and other private sector institutions and international development partners would support and complement Government efforts toward the development of science, technology and innovation for Namibia's economic transformation. It will also be a positive regulatory mechanism for prioritizing research in the country.

Another important initiative being carried out by the National Commission on Research Science & Technology (NCRST) is the national survey of Research, Science, Technology and Innovation (RSTI) related infrastructures. The main aim of RSTI infrastructures survey is to ascertain the scope of the different types of intra-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary infrastructures in use, in terms of major research equipment & services provided, different needs associated with the access and usage of these infrastructures, technical expertise and collaboration

regarding these research facilities. This is a mapping and inventory exercise of research infrastructures (including laboratories and other facilities) nationwide, detailing the scale of setup (current and planned), level of excellence, as well as particular strengths and opportunities based on which the national strategy on RSTI infrastructures would be formulated and will also inform the establishment of the envisaged National Research, Science, Technology and Innovation Valley. In order for the NCRST to collect meaningful data during this important exercise, the NCRST invites all stakeholders in the RSTI sphere to participate in this survey. The survey closes on 28 November 2014.

With this clear commitment by government to support research and development, the research community is called to ensure the extension of the understanding of the role of science and technology to the wide public or specific audiences in Namibia through the dissemination of knowledge and the research results, as well as their contribution to national development. Making easy access to scientific publications and reports should therefore be accompanied by a communication oriented strategy to raise public interest particularly among the youth.

This annual conference which is organised for the 2nd time and the International Journal of Science and Technology which is now in its third year of publication are indeed commendable initiatives, that will not only reach out to the science and technology community but also the economic actors and the whole of the population to enable them to fully understand the role of knowledge in supporting the attainment of the country's development objectives as well as

supporting the defined goals and the corresponding allocation of public resources.

The NCRST as a national Agency responsible for the promotion, coordination and developing research, science, technology and innovation encourages these initiatives and wished to propose a national research conference be organized annually, where Namibian researchers are given an opportunity to present their research findings. This shall also be supplemented by topic specific research conferences. Namibian researchers shall also be encouraged to publish their findings in peer-reviewed journals, through an incentive mechanism. The profile of existing local journals shall be elevated and new journals shall be established.

I am convinced that this Annual Science Research Conference and similar initiatives will continue to play an important role in our quest to produce a generally science and innovation-literate society and workforce, thus contributing greatly towards strengthening Namibia's competitiveness in the knowledge arena. I therefore would like to wish you all an enjoyable and productive Conference.

Thank you