



Participatory Design Conference

2014

Address by

The Chief Executive Officer

of the

National Commission on Research, Science and Technology

Director of Ceremonies

Honourable Joel Kaapanda, Minister of Information and Communication Technology

Invited Keynote Speaker Professor Pelle Ehn, Malmö University, Sweden

Professor Tjama Tjivikua, Rector of the Polytechnic of Namibia

Sponsors of the Conference

Management, Staff and Students of the Polytechnic and UNAM

Speakers and Conference Participants

Distinguished Invited Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning

It is my pleasure and a true privilege to participate at Participatory Design Conference 2014 hosted by the Polytechnic of Namibia and the University of Namibia. The Conference theme "*Reflecting Connectedness*" is indeed befitting as it recognises the important relations and interactions among people from all walks of life particularly in finding solutions to challenges faced by society. The National Commission on Research, Science and Technology as a specialised agency of government responsible for the coordination, supervision and promotion of research, science, technology and innovation is pleased to be associated with these types of initiatives. We would like to applaud organizers for bringing this conference to Namibia.

This conference on participatory design focuses on understanding the approach to actively involve stakeholders in the design process to ensure that the product designed meets their need and is usable. A conference of this type came at the right time as Namibia embarks on the journey of strengthening its

National System of Innovation. In the effort to strengthen the National System of Innovation, the National Commission on Research, Science and Technology through a National Consultative process has formulated of the three year National Programme on Research, Science, Technology and Innovation (NPRSTI) for 2014/15 to 2016/17. The National Programme on Research, Science, Technology and Innovation is expected to be approved by Cabinet and tabled in parliament over the next few weeks. The National Programme on Research, Science, Technology and Innovation (NPRSTI) identifies Namibia's priority areas for investment in research and innovation and presents an implementation programme for the remainder of the fourth National Development Plan (NDP4). The NPRSTI focuses on 5 key strategies (a) increasing science and technology financing; (b) building research capacities and strengthening research and development infrastructure; (c) creating an enabling policy and regulatory environment; (d) promoting public understanding of science and technology as well as (e) establishing and strengthening national, regional and international cooperation between stakeholders in RSTI.

With the hosting of this conference with participant ranging from academic specialists in the field of participatory design, industry partners, citizens and artists, we are presented with a number of opportunities which we must explore as we build our system of innovation:

1. Disseminating scientific and technological knowledge by ensuring the extension of the understanding of the role of science and technology and its impact concerning the national objectives to the wide public and policy makers.
2. Cooperation in research and innovation activities: This provide opportunities to better deal with the country's challenges, be it when

research-industry collaboration is concerned, or in case of either interdisciplinary or inter-institutional research activities.

3. Promoting innovation in the economic and social sectors by taking demand driven innovation as the right approach to advance the industrialisation of the country towards a knowledge based economy.

Such opportunities remains the corner stone of a functional system of innovation as described by the Triple Helix Concept developed by Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff regarding the relationship of government, industry and university.

One of the major challenges faced by the developing countries systems of innovation is the low level of investments in R&D. For Namibia, this could soon be as thing of the past as the National Research, Science and Technology (RST) Fund set out 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. The Fund gives preference to funding of those areas that are defined as national priorities in the S&T policy and strategy, while respecting freedom of research. It is from this fund that the NCRST contributed towards the hosting of this conference. During this financial year three calls are to be issued targeting specific recipients: individuals, research groups and young innovators. All of these have focuses on capacity building to ensure that a critical mass of researchers is created in Namibia to guarantee the strength and sustainability of the research and innovation system.

Although these positive development are encouraging more still needs to be done to address the challenges in the innovation system of Namibia. As no single “actor” has the knowledge and resources to tackle the innovation challenge unilaterally, the NCRST calls upon stakeholders to join us in this process. We would also like to encourage our researchers and innovators to make use of the opportunities presented and focus our intellectual capacity to develop innovative solutions that contribute to the competitiveness of our economy and improve the lives of our people.

I am confident that interactions among conference participant both during the sessions and outside the sessions, will allow us to build networks that speaks to the theme of this conference “*Reflecting Connectedness*”. I therefore would like to wish you all an enjoyable and productive Conference.

Thank you