



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

Keynote Address

by

Hon Dr. Itah Kandjii-Murandi, MP

Minister of Higher Education, Training and Innovation

At the Closing Ceremony of the National Science, Technology and
Innovation Festival 2015

Windhoek Country Club, Windhoek

3 July 2015

Director of Ceremonies;

Prof Andre du Pisani, Chairperson of the National Commission on Research, Science and Technology;

Commissioners of National Commission on Research, Science and Technology;

Dr. Eino Mvula, CEO of the National Commission on Research, Science and Technology;

Our guests and resource persons from South Africa;

Sponsors and Captains of Industries;

Representatives from Government Ministries and SOEs;

Representatives from the Private Sector,

Representatives from Non-Governmental Organisations;

Fellow Researchers and Innovators;

NCRST Staff Members

Distinguished Guests;

Members of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is my pleasure to join you this evening at the closing ceremony of the National Science, Technology and Innovation Festival 2015.

This year's Science, Technology and Innovation Festival was remarkable and a great success. The event provided a comprehensive, multi-faceted, interactive programme made up of some national and international keynote addresses, illustrated talks, workshops, short courses, competitions, demonstrations, displays, exhibitions, sport science events and field trips, to enthral and inspire our budding young scientists and their educators.

The programme for the week was filled with activities by various partner institutions from within Namibia and neighbouring countries, in particular South Africa. Participants at the Science, Technology and Innovation Festival encountered an array of cutting-edge science, engineering, technology and biomedicine solutions. This has indeed demonstrated to us that science and technology can be indeed fun.

With this initiative, we are confident that we have managed to achieve two key important results namely:

- increase learners/students interest and passion for science and technology
- public awareness on the importance of RSTI,

With regards to increasing learners/students interest and passion for science and technology, I am informed that over 3000 people visited the STI Festival, the majority of whom were students and learners. This forms part of our effort and commitment to work with all stakeholders to improve our country's performance in areas such as knowledge creation, knowledge impact, knowledge diffusion and creative outputs. For this performance improvement to be realised, we need to enthuse and inspire our youth to ensure that Namibia has the necessary talent base for R&D to benefit our economy and society. If we could attract the best and brightest into a career of science as a result of our sustained outreach efforts, Namibia's future will be bright, as the young people would become the drivers of new discoveries and innovations that create growth and enhance quality of lives of our people.

In addition, creating interest and passion for science and technology among our young people, through initiatives such as the Science Technology and Innovation Festival - could ignite a long-lasting passion in science which could inspire many more to ask “why” and “how”, to embark on a journey of learning and discovering.

With regards to public awareness on the importance of RSTI, I am also informed, that in addition to the visitors at the STI Festival, the Festival has received comprehensive media coverage, both traditional and on social media platforms. I would like to thank the media for taking our message to the public at large. This is part of our intervention to bring science into your everyday life. The approach is not only addressing the Namibian science and technology community but the whole of the population which are 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.

Demystifying science, technology and innovation, implies informing the public that innovative thinking and solutions needed, is not confined to scientists, or be about cutting-edge technology or rocket science. Simple innovations and small improvements, can sometimes make a bigger impact as they can be widely applied to enhance the quality of our daily life.

I am pleased to learn that many of our young people took part in the competitions launched by the NCRST to inculcate the culture of innovation in Namibia such:

- The *Big Innov8* Competition aimed at secondary school learners.

- Inventors Garage Competition which is part of the Science, Technology and Innovation Festival 2015.

I look forward to the announcement of the grant awards of the National Call for Namibian Youth Innovators- and invite interested Youth Innovators affiliated to recognized youth institutions/organizations to submit innovation project proposals to the NCRST for funding. This presents an opportunity to seek practical cost-effective solutions to solve daily problems through innovation.

Recognising the need to attract, retain and motivate professionals in Science, Technology, Engineering and Innovation, the Cabinet of the Republic of Namibia has adopted the Operational Guide for the National Research, Science, Technology, Engineering and Innovation Awards. The Operational guide provides for professionals in the field to be awarded for outstanding achievements and contributions in research, science, technology and engineering development and promotion. Awards are given in overall, functional and performance categories. In line with the Operation Guide, this year's request for nominations was posted to Namibian tertiary institutions, professional organizations, government ministries and secondary schools and an advert was placed in newspapers, and on the NCRSRT website. It is disappointing to learn that fewer than 5 nominations were received and that none of the nominees met the criteria set out in the Operation Guide. I would like to encourage all stakeholders in Science, Technology and Innovation to take advantage of this opportunity by nominating deserving recipients of these awards once we again issue the calls for nominations next year.

Conclusion

Finally, let me thank all partners and sponsors of this event, in particular our partners who came from across the borders to participate in this event. Science, technology and innovation development is a long-term undertaking, which no Ministry or Agency can tackle alone. As citizens of Namibia, we hold equal responsibility for the growth of this nation to empower our youth with science and technology at all levels of education, as it plays a pivotal role in shaping their lives and careers which in turn will benefit our nation. The future of our nation is in their hands, and they can elevate our nation to more advanced levels than what it is today. Let us join hands in making the learning of science and technology fun, today and always! I wish you a pleasant evening.

I thank you.