



**REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

Keynote Address

by

Hon Dr. Itah Kandjii-Murandi, MP

Minister of Higher Education, Training and Innovation

At the Official Opening of the National Science, Technology and  
Innovation Festival 2015

Windhoek Country Club, Windhoek

29 June 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;

I am deeply honoured to be here at this very prestigious event, the official opening of the National, Science, Technology and Innovation Festival 2015.

This year's Science Festival is particularly significant as Namibia embarks on the implementation of the National Programme on Research, Science and Technology for 2014/15 to 2016/17 that was approved by the Cabinet of the Republic of Namibia, and launched early this year. The importance of science and technology cannot be understated. For any successful economy, particularly in today's quest for knowledge based economies, science,

technology, and innovation are the basic requisites. If nations do not implement science, technology and innovation instruments, then the chances of getting themselves developed will not be realized. Namibia has long recognised this importance - hence the adoption of the National Policy on Research, Science and Technology as far back as 1999, and the enactment of the Research, Science and Technology Act, 2004 (Act No. 23 of 2004). It is also on this premise that His Excellency, Dr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, established the new Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Innovation in order to strengthen the line Ministry to drive innovation

Our fourth National Development Plan (NDP4) recognizes that education and skills are necessary enablers for any meaningful socio-economic development. Specifically, NDP4 requires us to invest at least 0.3% of our GDP in R&D per annum. Further the adoption of the National Programme on Research, Science and Technology for 2014/15 to 2016/17 which provides a clear direction on how that investment should be directed and the tangible targets that should be realised by 2017.

Namibia's long term aim is to transform its economy into a knowledge-based society. This will enable us to create high value jobs and prosperity for all Namibians. Our efforts in promoting innovation will continue to address our socio-economic challenges and also for Namibia to improve its ranking from the current 109 out 142 countries on the WIPO/ INSEAD's *Global Innovation Index 2014*. We are aware that, as a country we are faced by numerous challenges, which remain to be overcome head on to allow for Research, Science, Technology and Innovation advancement. These

challenges include: low investment in Research and Development; fragmentation of Science, Technology and Innovation activities; unavailability of centralized information system on STI related activities such as Research and Development (R&D); and innovation indicators, inventory of facilities, laboratories and instruments for research.

My Ministry, and its Agencies and Institutions of Higher Learning, are committed to work with all stakeholders to improve our country's performance in areas such as knowledge creation, knowledge impact, knowledge diffusion and creative outputs. As we look forward to even more exciting advances in Science, Technology and Innovation, we are mindful of the 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. Specific efforts are being made to promote public awareness on the importance of RSTI, through the development and implementation programmes as outlined in the National Programme on Research, Science Technology and Innovation. These includes the National Science, Technology and Innovation festival which is being held this week, and the National Science fair which will be held in September this year.

The National Science, Technology and Innovation Festival is organised with the aim of providing 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 captivate and inspire our budding young scientists and their educators.

Our success will be measured if we are able to attract the best and brightest into a career of science as a result of our sustained outreach efforts. By embracing a career in science, the young people would become the drivers of new discoveries and innovations that create growth and enhance quality of lives of our people. Apart from growing our talent pool, we also need to build the base of students' interest who passionate about science and technology. I am pleased to note that the programme for the week is filled with activities by various partner institutions from within Namibia and neighbouring countries, especially South Africa. Participants at the Science, Technology and Innovation Festival can look forward to a display of cutting-edge science, engineering, technology and biomedicine solutions. I therefore encourage you to encounter with science and technology as this indeed can be fun.

A long-lasting passion in science can be ignited in small ways, therefore the Science, Technology and Innovation Festival is all about sparking this initial interest in science. By making science obvious and simple, we hope to inspire many more to ask "why" and "how", to embark on a journey of learning and discovering.

While we seek to bring the public to the Science, Technology and Innovation Festival, we are also seeking to bring science into your everyday life. A policy agenda such as the one proposed by the RSTI Programme is not only addressing the Namibian science and technology community, but also the economic actors and 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. In this connection

deliberate efforts are being made to garner public support to researchers' results by encouraging the dissemination and publication of research results, as well as establish a reward and recognition system for RSTI achievers and achievements. I am pleased to inform you that the Cabinet of the Republic of Namibia has adopted the Operational Guide for the National Research, Science, Technology, Engineering and Innovation Awards, which would provide for professionals in the field, to be awarded for outstanding achievements and contributions in research, science, technology and engineering development and promotion.

I would like to underscore that innovative thinking and solutions need not be 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.

For example, this month, the NCRST has launched a number of initiatives to inculcate the culture of innovation in Namibia, these include:

- National Call for Namibian Youth Innovators- inviting interested Youth Innovators affiliated to recognized youth institutions/ organizations to submit innovation project proposals to the NCRST for funding
- The *Big Innov8* Competition aimed at secondary school learners.
- Inventors Garage Competition which is part of the Science, Technology and Innovation Festival 2015.

I invite all of you, especially the young people, to take advantage of these opportunities and unleash your creative potential, in devising conceptual solutions to the challenges facing our society. I see great possibility in the various collaborations to seek practical cost-effective solutions to solve daily problems. Let us all work together towards a more comfortable living environment and better quality of life.

## **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. Namibia and South Africa continue to enjoy a mutually beneficial relationship, since the formalisation of our technical cooperation agreement in the area of science, technology and innovation in 2005. I am pleased to note the participation of the dedicated team from South Africa in this event. I am equally pleased to learn that the NCRST is working on cementing this partnership between Namibia and South Africa, and that soon, Agency to Agency agreements will be signed with the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA), and also the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa.

Science, technology and innovation development is a long-term undertaking. It's a cornerstone strategy for building a knowledge-economy of an advanced nation. Let us make greater strides. Let us make learning of science and technology fun, today and always!

I Thank you.