



**REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

**OFFICIAL OPENING**

**NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION DAY**

By

Hon. Dr. Itah Kandjii-Murangi (MP)  
Minister of Higher Education, Technology and Innovation

**UNAM LEISURE CENTRE**

**08 AUGUST 2024**

Director of Ceremonies;

Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers

Dr. Alfred van Kent, Executive Director; Ministry of Higher Education,  
Technology and Innovation,

Executive Directors and Senior Government and Private Sector Officials  
present,

Professor Theresia Nkuo - Akenji, RUFORUM Board Chair and Vice  
Chancellor of the University of Bamenda, Cameroon,

Professor Kenneth Matengu, Vice Chancellor of the University of  
Namibia

Professor Osmund Mwandemele, Vice Chancellor of the International  
University of Management,

Dr. Eroid Naomab, Vice Chancellor of the Namibia University of Science  
and Technology,

Professor Anicia Peters, Chief Executive Officer, National Commission on  
Research, Science and Technology,

Professor Patrick Okori, RUFORUM,

Development Partners,

Distinguished invited guests,

Dear students

Members of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I extend greetings to you all, and extend my sincere gratitude for the invitation extended to deliver the Official Opening Statement at this Namibia Higher Education Day, which is a part of the Second Triennial Conference to be hosted by RUFORUM Member Universities in Namibia and other stakeholders in higher education in Namibia.

As we are aware, the generation and application of scientific knowledge and innovation in the global competitive world is the cornerstone for economic growth and global competitiveness. Without knowledge, nations rely on others to resolve their developmental and social challenges. The 1999 Presidential Commission on Education, Culture and Training observed, **and I quote :**

*“Globalisation, or the rapid change in technology and patterns of trade, with a free flow of goods, funds, manufacturing capacity, and information across international boundaries, means that for a society to remain competitive its members must be constantly learning.”*

I am therefore delighted that the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) will join RUFORUM Member universities during the Second Triennial Conference. Strategic partnerships in knowledge societies and economies cannot be overemphasized as these partnerships and networks are enablers of the sharing of knowledge, enhanced cross disciplinarily, innovations, and experiences. I therefore, congratulate the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) for joining the RUFORUM Member Universities.

The Higher Education Day creates an opportunity for higher education institutions to discuss challenges facing the sector, and develop innovative ways for African universities and in particular Namibian universities to contribute to social and economic development of Africa through industrialization.

**Director of Ceremonies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The UNESCO Chairs Seminar Series under the theme: “*Transforming knowledge for Africa's Future*” noted that higher education is a determining factor for sustainable development, contributing to socio – economic growth and poverty reduction, and enhanced well – being. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the enrolment in higher education in Africa in 2020 was only 15 million of the 236 million enrolment globally. Furthermore, Africa generates less than 1% of global research and invest 0.6% of GDP in research and development compared to the global average of 1.79%.

As we gather here at the Triennial Conference, these are the challenges that you should address to enhance the role and impact of universities and other institutions of higher learning in development of Africa and globally. The theme of today's programme, which focuses on : “Improving the role, relevance, and impact of higher education in

meeting Namibia's current and future human capital, science, technology, and innovation needs'' is timely and critical.

In addition, RUFORUM key focus area is agriculture, therefore we should collectively reflect on the challenges facing Namibia and Africa, especially to reflect on the role of Higher Agricultural education in the economic and social development of Africa. What are the challenges, what are the opportunities and what are the gaps? The role of Science, Technology, Innovation, and Indigenous Knowledge are key in this reflection as key enablers of modern agricultural productivity. The modernization includes finding alternative and unsustainable production such the use of hand hoes. Agenda 2063 aspires that at least by 2025, the Agricultural Sector will be modernised and is attractive to the youth and women. It is regrettably to note that food insecurity has increased in Africa also leading to undernourishment.

Research and technology should be used in both enhancing teaching and learning as well as enhancing productivity and manufacturing.

**Director of Ceremonies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Universities and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions are an essential foundation for shaping our future and are the incubators of knowledge, innovation, and skilled professionals. Therefore, it is imperative that our education system produces graduates

who possess not only knowledge, but also adaptability, creativity, and consciousness to make meaningful contributions to society.

The presence of important stakeholders, including public and private universities, TVET institutions, Government Ministries and Agencies, international partners, civil society organisations, researchers, and students, demonstrates our shared commitment to improve our education system. Your presence here signifies an unified determination to create an educational ecosystem that is responsive to the needs of the 21st Century.

An essential aspect that requires our attention is ensuring that our educational programmes and outcomes should respond to the needs of the current and future labour market demands. It is therefore necessary that higher education institution foster stronger partnerships with industry and government ministries to ensure that our graduates are equipped with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to function efficiently and effectively in competitive global contexts. The importance of Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) in driving our national development cannot be overemphasized. It is through research and innovation that we can address some of the most pressing challenges facing our country, from healthcare to agriculture, to environmental sustainability.

To the youth, the future generation, I convey the following message. You are the future leaders, innovators, and change-makers. Education is the

most powerful tool you have at your disposal to shape not only your destiny, but the destiny of our country and our nation. Embrace the opportunities before you, engage actively in your learning, and never stop questioning and exploring.

**Director of ceremonies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As Government, we have shown our commitment to support education, including higher education through policy development and implementation, allocation of financial resources, and promoting accessibility and equity in education. We acknowledge that education serves as the fundamental basis for constructing a prosperous and inclusive society. Therefore, we will continue to prioritize investment in education and work collaboratively with all stakeholders to achieve our shared goals.

In conclusion, I urge everyone to take advantage of this opportunity to participate in frank discussions, exchange experiences, and concrete strategies to advance our higher education system.

With these few words, I declare the Namibia Higher Education Day officially opened.

I thank you.