



WELWITCHIA
UNIVERSITY
WHERE EVERYONE IS AN ACHIEVER

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

**BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF HEALTH AND
SOCIAL SERVICES,
HONOURABLE HAMBELELA SUZAN
NDJALEKA,
AT THE OCCASION OF THE
9TH OFFICIAL GRADUATION CEREMONY**

**THURSDAY AND FRIDAY, 16 & 17 JULY 2026
MERCURE HOTEL, WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA**

- **Madam Chancellor and Co-Founder of Welwitchia University, Prof. Scholastika Ipinge**
- **Chairperson of the University Council and Co-Founder of Welwitchia University (in absentia),**
- **Vice-Chancellor Prof. Marius Hedimbi,**
- **Members of the University Council, especially Prof Alice Lakati form the Amref International University in Kenya**
- **Dr Andreas Mwoombola, Welwitchia University Group CEO**
- **Mr Edward Kafita, CEO of Welwitchia Integrated Services**
- **All our Professors**
- **Members of the academic and administrative staff,**
- **Representatives from other Higher Education Institutions**
- **Representatives from our regulators, HPCNA, NQA, NCHE and others**
- **Our Sponsors for this 9th Graduation Ceremony,**
- **Distinguished guests, partners & all Stakeholders, members of the media**
- **proud parents and families,**
- **Welwitchia Students and alumni,**
- **friends, and most importantly, the 2026 graduating class of Welwitchia University.**

All protocol observed as established.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Good morning.

It is an honour to join you on this important day. A day of celebration, reflection and fresh beginnings. Thank you to the University Council and the Vice-Chancellor for the gracious invitation to deliver this keynote address.

To the graduates before me: today we gather to recognise your dedication, long hours of study, the setbacks you overcame and the accomplishments you have achieved. You have earned this moment. Congratulations.

I wish first to recognize the many people whose support has made your achievement possible. To parents, guardians and families: your sacrifices, financial, emotional and practical form the invisible scaffolding of success. To faculty members and supervisors: your devotion to teaching, to demanding rigour and to encouraging curiosity has shaped these graduates' minds and characters.

To administrative and support staff: your work behind the scenes has created the conditions in which learning could happen. Graduates, you owe your success to many hands; please take time today to thank those who walked with you.

Dear Esteemed guests,

Welwitchia University chose a powerful theme for today's ceremony: **“From Knowledge to Impact: Shaping the Future.”**

Those words do more than adorn a programme; they issue a call. Knowledge is foundational. It equips us to understand complexity and to imagine alternatives. But knowledge by itself does not change lives. Impact requires that knowledge be translated into action: into products, policies, partnerships, performances and practices that improve people's lives, strengthen our institutions and preserve what matters most to our collective wellbeing.

As Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services, I see clearly how universities sit at the crossroads of our nation's most urgent priorities. Namibia is in a phase of deliberate transformation: we are diversifying the economy beyond extractive industries, expanding opportunities for young people, harnessing digital technologies with care, protecting our environment, and preserving our cultural heritage. Achieving these goals depends on people who can convert ideas into practical initiatives and transform data into sound decisions. It depends on graduates who do more than knowing, who act; who do more than analyse, who implement.

Dear Graduands,

A recent national report shows that 2,683 nursing graduates across the country did not pass the licensing examination to practice in Namibia, a stark reminder that knowledge must translate into impact, not into statistics of failure. Welwitchia University, however, has earned a strong reputation among industry partners, including practitioners within the Ministry of Health and Social Services, for producing nurses who excel in both theory and clinical practice; numerous success stories from hospitals and clinics attest to that quality.

Today Welwitchia proudly graduates some 982 nursing students among other graduates from its various schools and programmes, and I charge each of you nursing graduates to ensure you do not become part of the failing statistics but instead demonstrate the excellence this institution trains for by passing the national exam. To the academic staff: congratulations and thank you for equipping these graduates to make a measurable impact in our health sector and beyond.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to sketch three concrete pathways through which your knowledge can become measurable impact.

First: entrepreneurship and innovation.

Across Africa and here at home, graduates are founding firms and social enterprises that respond to local needs and create jobs. Consider renewable energy entrepreneurs who bring solar mini-grids to remote settlements, or graduates who design mobile platforms that connect farmers to markets and weather data. In Namibia, we have real opportunities in climate-smart agriculture, sustainable tourism, creative industries, and digital services that increase access to education and healthcare. If you are inclined to start a venture, begin with a small, testable prototype. Engage users early, iterate based on feedback, and form partnerships with mentors and incubators. The Ministry supports several startup programs and funding windows designed for early-stage ventures; do not hesitate to explore these options. Entrepreneurship is not only about profit; it is a mechanism for community problem-solving that can yield both economic and social returns.

Second: public service and evidence-informed policy.

Many of you will choose careers in the public sector, in NGOs, in international organisations or in research institutions. These roles are essential for translating research into policies and programmes that affect millions of lives. The skills you refined here: data analysis, critical thinking, research design are directly applicable to designing more effective education systems, healthcare responses, social protection measures and environmental management strategies. I encourage you to move beyond academic publication alone. Translate your conclusions into accessible policy briefs, convene community stakeholders, and pilot small-scale interventions that demonstrate feasibility before scaling. When evidence guides policy, public resources deliver better outcomes.

Third: cultural and civic leadership.

Our arts and humanities graduates play an indispensable role in preserving our stories, shaping our national identity and fostering social cohesion. Creative industries are not peripheral; they are central to how nations heal, remember and innovate. Whether you are a visual artist, a writer, a historian, **or a teacher**, your work strengthens the social fabric. Use your platform to document local histories, to create spaces for underrepresented voices, and to forge cultural initiatives that generate both meaning and livelihoods.

Cultural leadership can galvanise communities around common purposes and inspire broader civic participation.

Across these paths, certain dispositions and capacities will amplify your effectiveness. I emphasise five in particular: **curiosity, ethical judgement, adaptability, collaboration and communication.**

- **Curiosity** keeps you learning beyond the classroom. The most impactful professionals remain students for life.
- **Ethical judgement** matters because knowledge without an ethical compass can do harm. As you apply technology or research findings, ask: who benefits and who might be disadvantaged? Prioritise fairness, privacy and dignity.
- **Adaptability** is essential in a labour market that changes rapidly. Learn to pivot and to integrate new tools and methods.
- **Collaboration** across disciplines multiplies impact. Complex problems rarely yield to single-discipline solutions; bring scientists, artists and community leaders together.
- **Communication** is the ability to explain complex ideas to non-specialists and is a practical skill for turning insights into action. Policy makers, funders and communities respond to clarity.

Dear Esteemed guests,

I want to be explicit about technology. Artificial intelligence, digital platforms and data analytics offer enormous potential for education, healthcare, agriculture and governance. They can extend reach, tailor services and reveal insights previously hidden. Yet technology carries risks: bias in algorithms, breaches of privacy, and widening inequalities if access is uneven. I urge you to master these tools and to pair them with ethics. Build systems that are inclusive by design, advocate for data governance that protects citizens, and remember that technology is an instrument: a means to human ends, not an end in itself.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me propose three practical challenges you can take on immediately action that build habits and produce early impact.

- In the next six months, pick one local problem you care about and create a modest pilot. It could be a community education workshop, a simple app prototype, a micro-enterprise, or a public exhibition. Test quickly, learn from users, and be prepared to iterate.
- Mentor one or two younger students from your community. Share study strategies, career advice, or practical skills. Mentoring multiplies the reach of your knowledge and nurtures the next generation.

- Translate at least one academic output into a public-facing format: a two-page policy brief, a short video, a local radio segment, or a community workshop. Knowledge that remains locked in journals cannot change practice.

Dear Esteemed guests,

As a Ministry, we recognise the necessity of supporting these transitions from campus to community. We are expanding internship placements across ministries, strengthening university-industry partnerships, and allocating targeted grants for youth-led innovation and community-based research. These measures will complement existing university resources. We invite Welwitchia University to deepen collaboration with our offices on co-designed initiatives that link curricula to market needs while protecting academic independence and research integrity.

Dear Strategic Partners and Stakeholders,

The Government cannot do this alone. Industry must invest in training and apprenticeships. Civil society must create platforms for youth-led initiatives. Universities must stay agile and open to curricular renewal. Donors and private partners must focus on sustainable, locally led programmes. I call on all partners to move from episodic projects to long-term commitments that build capacities and institutions.

We must also keep our gaze on measuring the right outcomes. Impact is not simply measured by employment rates or incomes, though those are important. We should judge our success by whether people live healthier lives, whether communities are more resilient to climate shocks, whether cultural practices are sustained and enriched, and whether democratic participation is broadened. Our collective goal is to translate knowledge into multidimensional wellbeing.

Before I close, allow me to share a story that illustrates how persistence, humility and partnership turn knowledge into impact. A group of graduates from a university once developed a prototype for a low-cost irrigation system intended for smallholder farmers. Their first field test failed: pipes ruptured and yields were disappointing. Rather than abandon the project, they returned to the community, listened to farmers' observations, adjusted their design, and tried again the next season. The revised system doubled yields for several households and reduced water usage. The success did not come from a single brilliant innovation, but from iterative learning, community collaboration and ethical attention to local needs. That model: **To test, listen, and improve**, is available to all of you.

Graduates, you now possess knowledge that others may not. With that privilege comes responsibility to apply what you know for the common good, to engage with humility, and to lead with integrity. You are members of a generation that will steward Namibia through economic transformation, environmental uncertainty and cultural renewal. These tasks will demand your best efforts.

To parents and families: thank you once more for the sacrifices you made. To faculty and staff: thank you for shaping minds and characters. To Welwitchia University: thank you for preparing students to meet the demands of our time with curiosity and care.

In closing Ladies and gentlemen,

I offer a single, clear charge: carry knowledge into the world, and let impact be your measure. Shape your careers not merely by titles or earnings, but by the problems you solve and the lives you uplift. If you commit to that standard, if you turn learning into action with ethics and courage you will not only build fulfilling careers; you will help shape a future that is equitable, creative and resilient.

Graduates of Welwitchia University,

The future is not a distant place, it begins with what you do tomorrow.
Go forth with curiosity, courage and compassion. Congratulations,
and may your work honour the trust that our nation places in you.

Thank you.

Honourable Suzan Ndjaleka

Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services

Ministry of Health and Social Services

Republic of Namibia