

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY

**HER EXCELLENCY, LUCIA WITBOOI, VICE PRESIDENT OF
THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

FIFTH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AWARDS

**“EMPOWERING NAMIBIAN YOUTH FOR A SUSTAINABLE
FUTURE”**

3 SEPTEMBER 2026

WINDHOEK | KHOMAS REGION

- **Director of Ceremonies;**
- **Honourable Indileni Daniel, Minister of Environment, Forestry and Tourism;**
- **Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers present;**
- **Honourable Members of Parliament;**
- **Honourable Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma, Governor of the Khomas Region and other Regional Governors Present;**
- **Mrs Margaret Tjongarero, Board Chairperson of the Environmental Investment Fund, and the Board Members;**
- **Ms Amanda Kabejja Serumaga, Resident Representative for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Namibia;**
- **Mr Timoteus Mufeti, Environmental Commissioner;**
- **Members of the Sustainable Development Advisory Council;**
- **Captains of Industries;**
- **Development Partners;**
- **Esteemed Award Nominees;**
- **Distinguished Invited Guests;**
- **Members of the Media;**

- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

Good evening.

I am honoured to join you this evening at this auspicious occasion marking the fifth edition of the Sustainable Development Awards. This happy occasion provides us an excellent platform to recognize and celebrate individuals, institutions, organisations and communities whose leadership, innovation and commitment contributes to a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable Namibia.

Moreover, this award ceremony remind us that sustainable development is not the responsibility of the Government alone. It is a shared national endeavour that requires the commitment and participation of all sectors of our society, particularly our young people, who are central to shaping Namibia's future.

It is therefore befitting that this year's awards are held under the theme, "*Empowering Namibian Youth for a Sustainable Future.*"

Indeed, this theme challenges us to look beyond celebration and ask ourselves how we can equip our young people with the knowledge, skills, opportunities and confidence to participate meaningfully in our country's economic, social and environmental development.

Director of Ceremonies,

Our Sixth National Development Plan (NDP6) places our young people and youth empowerment as a primary driver for a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable development. In this regard, youth empowerment must create practical pathways to quality education, relevant skills, employment, entrepreneurship, innovation and leadership. Our aim as Government is to ensure that Namibian youth active participants, partners and architects of our nation's future.

This responsibility becomes even more significant when we consider our demographic reality. Approximately 71 percent of Namibia's population is below the age of 35. This youthful population represents one of our greatest national assets, but it also places a profound responsibility on all of us.

If we invest effectively in our young people, we can transform their energy, creativity, resilience and potential into a powerful force for economic growth and social progress. However, a demographic dividend does not happen automatically. It requires deliberate and sustained investment in education, skills development, employment, entrepreneurship, innovation and access to opportunity.

At the same time, the global economy is changing rapidly. Digital technologies, artificial intelligence, renewable energy, green hydrogen, climate finance and the circular economy are creating new industries and new opportunities. Therefore, Namibia must not remain just a consumer of these developments. We must position ourselves as active participants, innovators and producers.

Our young people must therefore be equipped to develop solutions, establish enterprises, conduct research, embrace technology and compete in an increasingly knowledge-based global economy.

Director of Ceremonies;

It is exactly for this reason that sustainability must be placed at the centre of our national economic transformation. Sustainability should not be viewed simply as an environmental obligation; rather, it should be understood as an opportunity to broaden our economy, create jobs, and fostering innovation and inclusion.

Namibia has significant potential in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, conservation, tourism, digital services and other emerging green industries. The challenge before us is therefore to convert this potential into tangible opportunities, particularly for our young people, so that they can establish enterprises, create employment, develop innovative solutions and build sustainable livelihoods.

The Government cannot achieve this alone. We need strong and firm partnerships with the private sector, financial institutions, universities, research institutions, civil society, development partners and communities.

Together, we must build an ecosystem that enables young people to move from education and skills development to innovation, entrepreneurship and economic independence.

Equally important, we must ensure that opportunities are inclusive. Our commitment to sustainable development must therefore also be a commitment to ensuring that no young person is left behind.

Director of Ceremonies;

It is within this broader national context that we gather tonight to celebrate those who are already turning these principles into action.

To all the nominees, I extend my sincere congratulations. Your achievements demonstrate that sustainable development is being advanced every day through entrepreneurship, innovation, community action, environmental stewardship and social responsibility.

To the award recipients, I offer my heartfelt congratulations. Your recognition tonight is a reflection of the impact of your work and the value of your contribution to our country. However, recognition also brings responsibility. I encourage you to use your success to create opportunities for others, particularly our young people.

Director of Ceremonies;

I wish to emphasize that the Sustainable Development Awards are more than an annual celebration. They are a reminder that meaningful change begins with people who are prepared to identify challenges, develop solutions and take action.

Every young Namibian represents huge potential as a future entrepreneur, scientist, innovator, community leader, policymaker and nation-builder. Our responsibility therefore, is not simply to speak about this potential, but to invest in it, nurture it and create the conditions in which it can be realized.

As I conclude, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, the Environmental Investment Fund (EIF), the Sustainable Development Advisory Council, and all stakeholders for your commitment, leadership and continued efforts in advancing sustainable development in Namibia. Your collaboration and dedication have been instrumental in making these awards possible and in promoting initiatives that contribute to a more sustainable, inclusive and prosperous future for our country.

As we celebrate the achievements tonight, let us also renew our commitment to the work that lies ahead. Let us ensure that our young people have not only the aspiration to succeed, but also the education, skills, opportunities, resources and support necessary to succeed.

Let us therefore work together to build a Namibia that is young, innovative, inclusive, resilient and sustainable — a Namibia where opportunity is not determined by geography or circumstance, where every young person has the opportunity to realize his or her potential, and where

every citizen can contribute meaningfully to our nation's development.

The future is young.

The future is sustainable.

And the future is ours to build together.

I thank you.