

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

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**MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, TRAINING &
INNOVATION**

AT THE

NUST GRADUATION CEREMONY

ON

25 APRIL 2019

09H00

SAFARI COURT HOTEL

Director of Ceremonies

The Chancellor of NUST, Hon. Prof Peter Katjavivi

Chairperson of the Council, Adv. Esie Schimming-Chase

Honourable Members of Parliament

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Distinguished Members of the Council

Acting Vice Chancellor, Mr Morné Du Toit

Faculty, Staff and Students

Family, Relatives and Friends

Distinguished Invited Guests

Graduating Class of 2019

Members of the Media

Ladies & Gentlemen

Good morning,

I am very delighted to be here, to witness the unmistakable signs of joy and satisfaction that characterize the celebratory mood prevalent in this hall.

Let me start with an African proverb: “It takes a village to raise a child”. Therefore, to the parents, families and friends who stood by the Class of 2019, and who cheered them on, and helped them to get here today – I say congratulations.

Dear Graduants, this is your day. I know that you have all worked hard to reach this moment. You have shuttled between challenging classes during the past year, you have volunteered, some of you interned, some of you even had to juggle your studies with jobs and so forth. You have also made lifelong friends and discovered exactly what you are made of. I hope that this educational journey has strengthened your sense of purpose and ambition. Heartfelt congratulations to all of you!

Director of Ceremonies, the NUST Graduation theme for the year 2019 as you may already know is: ***Catalysing Youth Empowerment for the 4th Industrial Revolution***. The clarion call to our Higher Education Institutions is unambiguous. You are called upon to meet the challenges of the digital revolution head on, and to play an increasingly important role in our innovation ecosystems.

Entrepreneurial universities, such as NUST, are expected to entrench and make work-based, and project-based learning, as well as entrepreneurship education and training an essential and mandatory parts of the curriculum. There is evidence that some work is being done in this regard at NUST, but still I urge you to continue your commendable efforts in this direction.

Today, universities around the globe have embarked on the production of highly skilled graduates, who can meet industry demand by offering research projects addressing contemporary challenges as well as Work Integrated Learning that is closely planned and implemented with industry. In order to enhance training relevance, it is critical that universities make industry and society their partners in the development and implementation of training programmes. After all training is for service.

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is on the rise as universities adopt strategic targets for student workplace participation, as an element of their studies. Based on this, a general understanding now prevails that university education should contribute to graduate employability, and that the future of nations depend on strong partnerships between universities and industry. And NUST is therefore not only urged to strengthen its relationship with Industry, but also challenged to audit, consolidate and align its academic offerings to the national development agenda – while it remains focused on its mandate.

Studies have reported that students, particularly at the undergraduate level, place a high premium on work placements. Where work place experiences are deliberately planned and managed, students are able to develop their professional identity; advance their theoretical knowledge and transferable skills; communicate effectively to people in diverse roles; engage in teamwork; broaden their digital literacy skills, and understand at a practical level, what ethical practice entails. These are all non-traditional approaches to University education and must be upheld at all cost.

As you may all be aware, the rapidly changing technology landscape, in particular, the use of High Performance Computing, complex modeling using Big Data sets, in the context of challenging cyber-security concerns, has altered the demand for certain occupations and skills. New skills that are required, include problem-solving, networking, entrepreneurship, managing complex processes and lifelong learning skills.

This new digitalized world with unprecedented opportunities is a reality that our universities must respond to with targeted relevant programmes. And prepare students to embrace this world to their advantage. In this regard I take note that NUST offers programmes in Cyber Security. And also, that through the efforts of

His Excellency Dr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, with the assistance of His counterpart the Hon'ble President of India a Centre of Excellence in Information and Technology will soon be established at NUST.

Director of Ceremonies, it is a fact that industry now demands graduates with the right mix of employability skills, in particular, soft skills such as negotiation skills, presentation and people skills. Due to the rapid technological changes, Industry is less likely to spend a lot of resources for on-the-job training. Hence, the need to focus and widen curricula content and integrate work-based learning during the formal years at university.

Africa has the youngest population in the world, and it is growing fast! By 2055, the continent's youth population (aged 15-24), is expected to be more than double the 2015 total of 226 million. There is no doubt in my mind that Africa can thrive, if governments, civil society, and industry, as well as universities act now to tap the energy and dynamism of this youthful population.

It is our duty to give our youth hope and confidence in the future of Africa and the world. Our priority shall be to build the right skills for tomorrow's jobs, nurture entrepreneurship and provide access to affordable and sustainable financing options such as venture capital, equity financing and offer credit, to those who seek to become entrepreneurs and active participants in growing the economies of their respective countries. And this is a great time to start!

A business-as-usual approach would risk exposing Africa not only to economic underperformance and a brain drain, but also to criminality, political and social unrests, and conflicts. Enlightened self-interest dictates that we empower our young people to be able to navigate the rapidly

changing digitalized world. However, this raises concerns about how well educators and decision-makers understand the needs and aspirations of the young people.

Dear Graduands, the future belongs to you. You have become the vanguard of our national aspirations, which responsibility now falls squarely on your shoulders. You can be assured that this new era of technology will inevitably empower new players in the international political economy and governments. That is why those who can adapt to the fast-paced world of technological advancement may end up taking the reins of global leadership and prosperity.

I hope that the years you have spent at NUST, have prepared and exposed you well and you will take up the challenge and be counted among those pioneers. You are expected to harness and take appropriate actions and make sure that you are not left behind.

Let us take as an example our continent, Africa: Africa has not only been home to many of the fastest-growing continents in the world for the last two decades, but it also resisted the global financial crisis better than most other regions, making the continent a place of tremendous economic opportunities and high returns.

However, despite immense progress made during the past two decades, including with the Millennium Development Goals and now Sustainable Development Goals, there are some areas in Africa that need to be addressed, these are structural challenges such as: persistent insecurities and conflicts, Gender-based violence, violent extremism and terrorism, State Fragility, poverty and youth unemployment.

It is therefore, critical to generate through rigorous, innovative, and evidence-based research, new thinking and innovative policy options to unlock Africa's tremendous potential and improve its relations with the rest of the world, while addressing its most pressing structural and governance challenges.

Director of Ceremonies, I am pleased that NUST is making headway, despite having gone through '*lean times*' characterized by challenging economic environment. We have all felt the bite as the economy contracted, slowing down business and creating doubt and in some quarters. But do not despair because there is every indication that we are about to emerge from these economic challenges!

Graduands, this is the time to promote yourselves! Be ready to lead and to inspire those that will graduate next year and in the years to come. Become trail-blazers as leaders and as architects of the destiny of our young Republic.

With these words, I once again congratulate you and thank you. I wish you the very best in all your future endeavours!

I thank you!