

Speech of Alfredo Tjiurimo Hengari on the occasion of the graduation ceremony of the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), 13 October 2017, Safari Court Hotel, Windhoek, Namibia

“Re-imagining University Engagement in the New Economy”

Chancellor of the Namibia University of Science and Technology, Professor
Peter Katjavivi

Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Training and Innovation, Dr Becky
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Acting Chairperson of Council, Mr Marcus von Joney and esteemed Members
of Council

Vice Chancellor of the Namibia University of Science and Technology, Dr Tjama
Tjivikua,

Dear graduates, parents, family and friends, ladies and gentlemen

Good morning,

I Introduction: The Republic as an opportunity for the University

1. Jean Jaures, at 47, the leader of the French Parti Socialiste as he is conferring in 1903 certificates of achievement to learners at a High School in the Tarn region says: *“Oui, la République est un grand acte de confiance et un grand acte d’audace”* (Yes, the Republic is a great act of confidence and it is a great act of audacity).¹ The Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), from which your excellence is recognized today is a Republican institution. Its creation in 1995 speaks to acts of courage in the Republican journey. It is why, it is a great honor for me to be present here today as guest speaker at this graduation ceremony – which not only celebrate your achievement – but also the life of our Republic. On the occasion of the elevation of Namibia from skunk apartheid status to the rank of a free and sovereign Republic on 21 March 1990, the Founding President of Namibia, Dr Sam Nujoma in his inaugural speech says: *“Our achievement of Independence imposes upon*

¹ Jean Jaurès. Les Grands Discours de la République : 35 discours pour une République et l’émancipation. L’Humanité Hors Series, 2017.

us a heavy responsibility, not only to defend our hard-won liberty, but also to set ourselves higher standards of equality, justice and opportunity for all, without regard to race, creed or colour. These are the standards from which all who seek to emulate us shall draw inspiration."² President Sam Nujoma had you in mind - and the occasion of graduation you have imposed today on a Republican institution speaks to you as bearers of equality, justice and opportunity.

I am aware that graduation is a special moment in the life of an individual. It is a crowning moment after years of hard work and intense experiences in learning. Beyond learning and the professional growth a certificate could offer, it is also an opportunity for you to take distance from your accomplishment - to think about the friendships you have forged - how you have contributed to the life of this University, and the relationship that you should maintain with NUST going forward. As a former student and university teacher, I am conscious of the strains you have encountered in your expedition to graduation.

2. My University journey started in 1993 on your campus on the hill. I must say that I have precious souvenirs of the year I commuted from Katutura to the Hill before our 'forced removal' to the UNAM Campus in Pionierspark. I have no doubt that you will nourish the beautiful memories during your time at that temple of republican excellence.

3. Whenever I travel for leisure but more often on official business, I always invite a taxi driver or my host to show me one or two main University sites. I get a sense of relief when a University campus is on a hill or is monumentally central, communicating as an edifice of knowledge with other Republican institutions, and the life of the city. The University of Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire), Makerere University in Kampala, (Uganda), the University of South Africa in Pretoria, Wits University in Johannesburg, the University of Helsinki (in Finland), Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar (Senegal), Columbia University in New York, Istanbul University in Turkey have campus sites worth admiration. The second oldest university in Western Europe (after the University of Bologna in Italy), La Sorbonne where I studied communes candidly with the Pantheon, a burial site where the French Republic honors outstanding men and women. La Sorbonne also converses with the Lycée Louis-le-Grand, a prestigious college where Léopold Sedhar Senghor, distinguished writer and founding President of Senegal, and the inspiring

² Sam Nujoma. Inaugural Speech Of His Excellency Dr Sam Nujoma on March 21, 1990, http://www.swapoparty.org/1990_inaugural_speech.html accessed September 2017

poet activist from Martinique Aimé Césaire completed school in the 1920 and 1930s.

4. Dear Graduates, I am rendering homage to the sites of knowledge I have evoked for a reason. Spatial planning and architecture is symbolic – therefore an important analytical category in the life of a nation.

5. Let me hasten to add here that some of the Universities as I witnessed have lost their glow – Makerere University, once grand lieu of excellence, educating Julius Mwalimu Nyerere, Tanzania’s Baba wa Taifa (Swahili for Founding father of the nation), before he proceeded to Edinburg University is a shadow of its former self – with dilapidated infrastructure, shortages of books, and low morale among academics. In a 2008 paper, Student Activism, Structural Adjustment and the Democratic Transition in Sub-Saharan Africa, Leo Zellig offers a discouraging picture about the state of higher education in the sub-region. I shall not go into the details of that paper.

6. I want to emphasize in part through the evocation of other University sites as analytical categories, the reason I have been invited to this ceremony. I have been asked to: ‘Reimagine University Engagement in the New Economy’. I will attempt to discern the conversation in three parts. First, *the Republic as an opportunity for the University*. Second, how the University engages two **contexts through absence and marginality**. In the third part, I shall talk to the **potential for transformation from an unpromising canvas**. By talking to University spaces as forms of imagination - where politicians, policy-makers and society choose to locate the University is a wholesale illustration of hierarchy of the innovation eco-system and priority of knowledge in the life of a nation. The Namibia University of Science and Technology, from which you are graduates is on a hill. Without doubt, its location is an Apartheid construct. I would struggle to believe that it was accidental. It is a potent intent and demonstration of reflection, curiosity, questioning, learning, expertise, innovation and knowledge as crucial barometers in the development and progress of a nation.

7. When problematizing a University, as I have been asked to do, many definitions of what the University is, could be more than sufficient. But I prefer the problem-solving framing of the University in the tradition of the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce who in 1891 defines the *University as an association of persons supported and privileged by the state in order to allow a nation to receive intellectual guidance with the mission to solve theoretical problems as they arise in the process of*

development. If we decode generously the definition of Professor Teirce, the Republic is an opportunity through which the University performs its avant-garde role as a custodian of knowledge production and diffusion. I shall also add to this what I found to be an urgent phrasing of the University. Last night, Dr Alioune Sall, at a NUST public lecture on Africa, and competitiveness referred to the University as a “*workshop where you engineer the future*”.

II Two Contexts: Engaging absence and marginality in the new

8. One of the preliminary points in the discussion about the role of the University in society is the ability to nourish degrees of finality around critical thinking. Since I have raised the question of critical thinking, I might be tempted as a consequence to briefly interrogate ‘critique’ (and not necessarily criticism) as a mission of University life. At its core, critique is about reflection and analytical faculties. This should allow us to examine the situation as it is, or as we observe it, telling each other what we would otherwise not have told each other - leaving so-called subjective elements such as ideologies and affiliations on one side. Evidently, it is necessary to ask if such a situation would be possible!

9. In his book *La formation de la Pensée Critique (1999)*, Jacques Boisvert, who teaches psychology in Canada develops critical thinking alongside four categories: One – the evaluation of sources in terms of credibility; – Two – analysis of arguments; Three – presenting the argument and Four – respecting different phases in the resolution of the problem.³ Thinking critically and solving problems is central to the educational enterprise – but it is also a challenge. How do we ensure that the University lives up to its vocation of critical thinking? How do we verify progress around such notions? I don’t have answers to these existential questions!

10. All things being equal, I do know that to re-imagine University engagement in the *New Economy* imply that we more or less jump into some form of unequivocal critical conversation. Before the University externalizes the conversation about its role – *To Reimagine*. It must have a lucid raison d’être – a reason for being – which in itself is a consequence of self-critique and assessment of context.

11. The Namibia University of Science and Technology with 12

³ Jacques Boisvert. *La Formation de la pensée critique*. Éditions du Nouveau Pédagogique. 1999

245 students, one of two recognized Public Higher Education Institutions (PHEI), alongside the University of Namibia with 20 619 students operate in two macro-contexts: The first is NATIONAL - in which both are part of a duopoly in validating knowledge and expertise through the conferment of certificates, diplomas and degrees. Our two public Universities don't meet the definition of small according to the Times Higher Education World University Ranking (small as less than 5000 students). The second is a global context, in which they must compete with peers for recognition as sites of excellence in education and research. The University to which I am talking to in this assembly evolves within society - Namibia - a small state with sociopolitical and economic particularities. These specificities and the constraints that accompany action orient the expectations that we should place in the University as a site of learning and research as we attempt to craft its engagement in the new economy. What is new when we are talking about the new economy? What is the place of the University in that architecture? By invoking physical space and the University as a center in the life of a nation as an analytical category I have already exposed my biases. After all, I have spent the past 23 years of my life in Universities, including the one I have travelled from (Sciences Po Paris), which is a crucible of French political and economic elites. By appealing to critical thinking and the requisite resources, I have also set the scene for critical thinking as the base through which the University should engage in the life of the nation.

12. Professor Klaus Schwab, Founder and President of the Davos-based World Economic Forum published a widely-commented book in January 2016, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*⁴. The book defines The Fourth Industrial Revolution as a fusion of new technologies and our physical world, the digital and the biological, which makes the ongoing revolution profoundly different from the previous revolutions. That world according to Klaus is about smart factories, mobile super-computing, intelligent robots, self-driving cars, neuro-technological brain enhancements, genetic editing and other inventions. In Europe and parts of Asia, there is evidence of how these dramatic changes are shifting the world of work and ways of life. Without being an active participant, Africa is likely to suffer the consequences of these rapid disruptions in human evolution. Earlier this year, one of the mainstream French Presidential candidates from the *Parti Socialiste*, Benoit Hamon led Ted-Ex style

⁴ Klaus Schwab. *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*, World Economic Forum, 2016.

campaigns talking about robotics and their potential *en masse* displacement of human labor. As we learned later, the result of the French Presidential elections has been a 39-year-old who had promised that he would replace the Old world with the New.

13. Singapore where I have been on teaching assignments several times this year has been in a deep conversation about the World of the Future. In that city-state, On 7 February this year, the Committee on the Future Economy (CFE), established a year earlier delivered its report *Pioneers of the Next Generation* to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Long. The C.F.E sketched its vision of a future economy where people are *“inspired to learn throughout their lives, businesses are innovative and nimble, the Republic of Singapore is connected and vibrant and the government coordinated, inclusive and responsive.”*⁵

14. In a letter dated 8 February (a day later) to the Co-chairmen of the Committee, Prime Minister Lee accepting all the recommendations says: *“The strategies are our guide but what counts is how well we implement them to transform our economy. This will require difficult trade-offs as our resources are limited and we have to take calculated bets. We will take a hard-headed, pragmatic approach. When results are promising, we will vigorously pursue them. When a scheme does not look like it is going anywhere, we must have the courage to cut losses. That is how we progressed for the past 50 years and the only way to continue progressing in future.”*⁶

15. It is not a coincidence that the *Committee on the Future Economy* was convened in Singapore at a time when the World Economic Forum had decided to convene its 2016 Annual Meetings under the theme: “Mastering the Fourth Industrial Revolution”. It is a pro-active response to the structural shifts and disruptions occurring in the external environment, and their potential impacts on a small state with specific vulnerabilities.

16. To compare is not to have reason, the French would opine. But Singapore by virtue of its recent experience with coloniality, and less so France, is a Segway into the framing of a Namibian conversation about the University in harnessing national talents for a changing world. One of

⁵ Committee on the Future Economy. *Pioneers of the Next Generation*. CFE, 2017.

⁶ Straits Times. A new chapter in the Singapore story.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/new-chapter-of-the-singapore-story> accessed 13 September 2017.

the premier vocations in the University's ethos of universality is to lead in knowledge, to investigate, to innovate and to shape the conversation about economic development; about our prosperity as a nation. Ordinarily, the University is the center of innovation eco-system. To do so effectively, the University should be up to date with the issues and themes of the day: The Fourth Industrial Revolution, Connectivity, Smart Cities, Green Technologies, Artificial Intelligence to list but a few of the issues that could be central to human progress. It is the University whose leaders and professors are connected, and participate at seminars in Davos that would be able to say: Yes, we are in the future economy! It is a country whose leaders, technocrats, think tanks and civil society are part of that transnational elite of ideas, its innovation systems and issues that would be able to say: yes, we are in the future economy! A country whose media houses cynically investigate the presence on its shores of Professor Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel in Economics with groundbreaking work on inequality is yet to understand the world of the future! A country whose media is disparaging when the President leaves the country to participate in events that are central to development is yet to understand how the world of the future is taking shape.

17. By talking about the Future Economy, I deform deliberately the theme that is under discussion – engagement in the NEW ECONOMY. The pilgrims to Davos in Switzerland and cutting edge countries like Singapore are not in the New Economy. The New Economy is yesterday, it is today, – it has been discovered! We are yet to discover it!

18. Esteemed graduates, I don't want to sound gloomy – certainly not at a graduation ceremony and its merry mood. But since I have already referred to Jean Jaurès, I might as well call on him again in his famous speech to learners in 1903 in the Tarn where he says: *“Le courage, c'est de chercher la vérité et de la dire”*⁷ – (Courage is to go search for the truth and to say it). We have to raise difficult things here in the academy where academic freedom is guaranteed because the Republic as an act of confidence and audacity as Jaures would intone, is also made of successes that we should celebrate – as we are doing now through this auspicious graduation ceremony. But as *Patrick Le Hyaric*, member of the European Parliament, and editor of *L'Humanité* cautions, *“the Republic can become thinner and it can die if it is unable to justify its*

⁷ Jean Jaurès. Speech delivered at a high school in the Tarn region, 1903,

existence".⁸ If we don't interrogate the Republic, we might miss the quality education=quality citizens sequence raised by the late Namibian architect and politician, Nico Bessinger.

19. The theme: "*Reimagining University Engagement in the New Economy*" is without doubt about unmasking the dead perspectives in an open-book Republic! At least, that is how I understood the mission that had been assigned to me. When we are asked to *reimagine university engagement*, we should remind ourselves that we are in essence asking the question anew as to how the University can fulfill its special mission in Society. A definite response to this question would impose two other questions: What type of society do we have in Namibia? What would the role of the University be in Namibian society? At a structural level, Namibia is a developing country, a *false upper middle-income country* with dominant features of inequality and social exclusion akin to what the Spanish Sociologist, Professor Manuel Castells refers to as the Fourth World in chapter two of his book - *The Rise of the Network Society* (1996).

20. The World Economic Forum released two weeks ago what is a hugely anticipated report in global economic planning and policy circles - *The 2017-2018 Global Competitiveness Index*, which must be consulted alongside the *Human Capital Index of 2017*.⁹ Before I underline a few aspects about the indexes and Namibia's place in it – let me demine the field and the data-sets with what Professor Xavier Salai-Martin of Columbia University says on competitiveness: "*Economic competitiveness matters. But not as an end in itself - it matters because nations that are more competitive are more productive, and are therefore more able to provide for the social needs of their people.*"¹⁰ Singapore and Switzerland are excellent illustrations of what competitiveness can do for human development and prosperity.

21. In the *Global Competitiveness Index 2017-2018*,

L'Humanité. *Les Grands Discours de la République : 35 discours pour une République et l'émancipation*. L'Humanité Hors Series, 2017.

⁹ World Economic Forum. *Insight Report, The Global Human Capital Report 2017* Preparing people for the future of work, WEF, 2017.

¹⁰ Xavier Salai-Martin. *4 reasons why your country should be more competitive*, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/09/global-competitiveness-report-2017-trends> accessed 5 October 2017

Namibia is ranked at 90 out of 137 countries. Compared to 2015-2016, we have gone down by 6 places. Out of the 12 pillars used in the country assessment, ranging from public institutions to innovation, our scores are particularly poor in Health, Primary Education, Higher Education, Technological Readiness, Business Sophistication, Innovation and Market Size. There is not much we can do about market-size unless birth-rates hit industrial levels! In the sub-indexes on Efficiency Enhancers, Innovation and Sophistication Factors our scores are even more troubling. On Pillar 3 - Macro-Economic environment, we are at 107 out of 137 countries. When you analyze Pillar 1 Public Institutions, the index is damning on Ethics and Corruption, Public Trust in Politicians, Security and Diversion of Public Funds. I don't know if it could be comforting, the only area where we are "solid" is property rights – which when you judge by the ongoing conversations about land could also take a knock in the coming months and years.

Moreover, the WEF Human Capital Report of 2017 ranks us at 99 out of 130 countries assessed in the Overall Index. In the sub-index Know-How (availability of skilled employees and economic complexity), we fall a further 15 places to 114, sitting uncomfortably in the bottom tier, where you find states emerging from war and conflict – and not the Upper Middle-Income country that we are! Tertiary enrolment ranking is at 114, and skills diversity of our graduates is on the weak side at 104.

The 5th National Development Plan (May 2017), in its appraisal of Higher Education in Namibia reinforces these findings of the World Economic Forum Human Capital Index. Specifically, it lists four challenges:

- *Low access to university for poor and rural students.*
 - *High drop-out and low graduation at 50%*
- *Limited infrastructure for quality teaching, research and innovation.*
 - *Weak linkages with the labor market¹¹*

22. At the Tucsin Public Lecture on *The Challenges Ahead For Tertiary Education* in June 2008, Dr. Tjama Tjivikua is quoted in a Konrad Adenauer Stiftung publication as having made what I think is fundamental to the University's ability *To Reimagine* and *To Engage*: *"Without good professors, there are no good students; without good professors, there is no research. It is research which characterizes a good*

¹¹ National Planning Commission. Namibia's 5th National Development Plan 5: Working together toward Prosperity – 2017/18 – 2021/22. Government of the Republic of Namibia, 2017

tertiary institution.”

The point to emphasize here is that if we don't have professors in the University, we will struggle 'To Reimagine'. Dr. Tjivikua also raised alarm at that lecture about vocational education and variations in funding per head. I hope that the new formula as enunciated by the National Council on Higher Education from the 2016-17 academic year, emphasizing transparency has been able to deal with some of the challenges of yesterday.

23. The discerning *Technical and Vocational Education Training, Higher Education and Innovation Policy Review of 2016*¹² (under the leadership of UNESCO) makes interesting conclusions about the state of skills and weak industry linkages in the country. It says: “Namibia’s education system does not provide a strong enough foundation for VET, Higher Education and Innovation”.

- On Quality, the Report says: *“Both public universities suffer from severe shortages of qualified academic staff. Internal quality assurance systems have been introduced in the two public universities, and in some of the private higher education institutions, but they need to be harmonized”*.
- And on Relevance, it says: *“Internships or entrepreneurship training have been introduced, and a few tracer studies conducted, but there are no sound policy frameworks and strategies to systematically guide these arrangements. Both public universities conduct research and provide outreach services, but they lack consistent research agendas and partnerships with industries appear weak”*.

It also makes the point about poor learning outcomes in primary and secondary education as a recipe for a high drop-out rate (referred to NDP5 as a main worry), and also raises as a consequence quality concerns in higher education.

24. Dr Becky Ndjoze-Ojo, Deputy Minister of Higher education, esteemed graduates, ladies and gentlemen, I am aware that the privilege that I have to speak on this auspicious occasion imposes certain constraints. I speak on the issues from the vantage point of marginality. As someone who has been living outside Namibia for the past 14 years, a sense of decorum should prevail. I speak under

¹² UNESCO. Technical and Vocational Education Training, Higher Education and Innovation Policy Review: Namibia. UNESCO, 2016

the control of the Assembly but with the academic freedom that underpins this moment. I also know that I would fail in my mission if I don't speak to the challenges and opportunities as I see them, and as the evidence presents itself. I am attempting to be consistent with the four criteria in critical thinking that I had laid out earlier.

25. The Namibia Statistics Agency concludes in 2015 that around 9% of Namibians fall in the category of a highly-educated workforce – and a shocking 1.1% within that core have postgraduate qualifications. It is a paltry 7 796 Namibians who must lead the innovation eco-system, and within the 1.1% we must also dialogue to questions of quality raised in the UNESCO report that I have been referencing extensively. The report worryingly highlights non-separation of the policy-setting and oversight functions, including overlapping mandates (between the NTA, NQA and NCHE) as leading to confusion and low transparency for training providers, enterprises and individuals.

26. Capacity constraints within the Ministry of Higher Education Ministry notwithstanding, the existing policy challenges are made dire by the lack of adequately qualified staff in our two public universities. At UNAM, 191 academic staff hold PhD degrees (20.8 per cent of the full-time staff), 510 have Master degrees as their highest qualifications (55.7 per cent), and 215 have Bachelor's/Honors degrees (23.5 per cent). At NUST, out of 75 teaching staff, 15 have PhDs, which ordinarily is the entry requirement for teaching in the University. The picture is undeniable worse in Private Higher Education Institutions, putting in question the validity and quality of degrees conferred. If we are to avoid betraying the hopes and aspirations of young graduates, we have to sharpen our conversation on higher education, and education in general.

III) Transforming from the unpromising canvas

27. What I have attempted to sketch by appealing to evidence from external reviews in the form of indexes from the World Economic Forum, the UNESCO national review (*Technical and Vocational Education Training, Higher Education and Innovation Policy Review of 2016*), including key developmental documents such as the *Harambee Prosperity Plan*, NDP 5, and a few other data-sets is the unpromising canvas from which we should “*Reimagine University Engagement in the New Economy*”.

28. You would agree with me in this assembly that the University

as an agent of societal transformation must have the requisite means to contribute to the social, economic and cultural development of our people. For Namibia to succeed, programs at NUST and the UNAM must be aligned to these three dimensions of human development. Development is a cultural process, which cannot be imposed from the exterior –it is an organic journey, within society and inherent to it. This makes the University a reference point by virtue of its capacitation role in society. Namibia is a developing country. We have many Namibians who are struggling as a result of what the past had imposed. They are without means to participate meaningfully in the world that is emerging. The University should be an opportunity for us to change that.

29. The University as a Republican institution must be able to provide the state with the requisite human and technical resources to allow policy and program implementation. This is essential for development to take place to enable us to lift the masses of our people out of poverty.

30. But to these noble Republican missions, we should ask a few questions - how can the University reimagine if it is unable to contribute meaningfully to the production of knowledge and its diffusion? How can the University train enlightened and cultivated citizens capable of contributing to our economic development in the absence of research, quality infrastructure, and not to mention professors? Extending the conversation posed tastefully by the Congolese scholar Valentin Yves Mudimbe in his book *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge*, Achille Mbembe, the philosopher from Cameroon in his book *Critique de la Raison Nègre* raises disapprovingly the point about Africa always being imagined as a continent that is best understood for its lack of something.¹³ Can we reimagine forms of engagement in the future economy when the University is always faced with a chronic lack of what is core to it fulfilling its mandate in society? Or are we condemned to have Universities that are in a permanent “survival driven phase”, struggling with transition to the “efficiency-driven phase” and eventually to the “ability-driven” phase.

31. Under its strategies on Economic Progression, the *Harambee Prosperity Plan* aims to improve the quality of higher education by considering financial incentives for Namibian Higher Education Institution’s ranked amongst the Top 30 universities on the Africa

¹³ Achille Mbembe. *Critique de la Raison Nègre*. La Découverte, 2013.

Universities Ranking Index.¹⁴ How will the University succeed in that mission when resources are thinner – but their missions are expanded to meet the conflicting ambitions of massification, quality teaching, research and national development? The better place to start (I think) should as a consequence be to *Reimagine the University in National Development* - outlining an urgent immediate path, with the mandatory resources, human and financial in order to allow it to fulfill its missions. We should give the University value – it must be a place where leaders return often to deliver lectures and confront different issues in society. It is a way of telling students and the academic corps that the place they inhabit is pivotal to the growth and survival of the state.

32. Marc Sangnier, the French Roman Catholic Thinker - would say that democracy is the choice to carry a high level of conscience and citizen responsibility. Our national conscience currently is very weak, and so is our sense of collective responsibility in elevating certain themes, including higher education to a national talking point or a crisis. Also, the University ecosystem, if it is to be one of the centers of the Republic should shoulder its fair share of blame for the current state of affairs.

33. I constantly ask myself how we can transform Namibia, change its course and the plight of the poor when we are all part-time academics, part-time senior civil servants, part-time businessmen, and part-time politicians. We do know that Intellectual capital formation and excellence is critical to development. But I don't know if we can hone excellence when we are part-time in everything that we do. We have a political and economic elite in Namibia. Unfortunately, we don't have a policy elite – a constituency of politicians, academics, media and entrepreneurs conversant with issues beyond self-interest. For the Harambee Prosperity Plan to succeed, we need a robust policy elite.

34. To reimagine your role as a University does without doubt imply an academic corps that is at the center of debates in different public forums, engages in self-appraisal, which is the *raison d'être* of the University. The silence of academics in light of many burning questions is depressing. Pierre Mendes-France, a Prime Minister of France for six months in the 1950s – but consequential in his method is instructive when he says: *C'est la lumière du passé qui éclaire la route de la vie, et*

¹⁴ Republic of Namibia. Harambee Prosperity Plan 2016/17-2019/20: Namibian Government Action Plan Towards Prosperity for All. Government of the Republic of Namibia, 2016

qui nous permettra au milieu de difficultés, de déterminer nos décisions.(It is the the light of the past which enlighten the road ahead, and would allow us to determine our decisions in the middle of difficulties). In the middle of the current difficulties, and what I think is a crisis of higher education, your role as a University is crucial in illuminating society with regard to what should be done and what the future should look like. I think that there is light at the end of the tunnel (and it is not the oncoming train). The Harambee Prosperity Plan offers through its vocabulary of action the conditions of possibility from which we can create the qualitatively new. We have to pursue HPP alongside the NDP5 with determination to engineer a future of prosperity.

35. Allow me in the final part of my speech to thank sincerely the Vice Chancellor, Dr Tjama Tjivikua for his intellectual stewardship and managerial competence in building this University under difficult circumstances. This is without question one of the best-managed institutions in Namibia! There are many great things ahead for the Temple on the Hill.

36. Professor Peter Katjavivi, you alongside the late Dr Mosé Tjitendero, (a colossal intellectual), President Hage Geingob, Nahas Angula, the late Hidipo Hamutenya returned to this country on the eve of independence with degrees from some of the leading Universities of the world. Enviably, you at Oxford University, (the oldest University in England); Mosé Tjitendero and Nahas Angula from Columbia University; Hidipo Hamutenya, completing a Master Degree at the great McGill University in Canada, and Hage Geingob graduating from the New School of Social Research in New York. You all inspired a generation. I am honored to have graduated from UNAM under your hand. Your stellar and enduring contributions to higher education in an independent Namibia make you peerless in the sector.

37. My parting shot is for you, valued graduates. In their last five-track album Kaleidoscope EP, the British band Coldplay, an ensemble worth listening to, has a song under the title Miracles (Someone Special). It caught my attention for it is a song that appeal to the difficult journey you have travelled to graduation.

38. A few months ago, I went back to Eric-Arthur Blair, perusing his classic in activist literature, *Animal Farm* and also taking a keen interest in his journey of life as George Orwell the writer, his work against different totalitarian forms. But the work of George Orwell should not only be reduced to anti-totalitarian activism. Orwell was more than that.

All his life, he did not stop travelling and learning without conceding his views against the totalitarian violence of his time. Orwell is also known for having theorized the concept of common decency.

39. Dear graduates, some of you will occupy leadership positions at in future. There are those of you who are already in managerial and leadership positions. What Orwell referred to as common decency is the ethic of being exemplary. It is not easy! You now have education, which Nelson Mandela framed as the 'greatest tool to change the world' in his famous speech as he was receiving a *Doctorat Honoris Causa* at the Amphitheater Richelieu at the Sorbonne in July 1996. You should embrace your special mission with dedication and confidence to change society for the better. What this University should offer you is an idea of justice, which the sophisticated Indian Nobel in Economics, Amartya Sen evokes at length in his book of the same title. Your qualification gives you the tools to serve with distinction. It is the honor that you should confer to your University, its persistent teaching corps and the Republic of Namibia.

Congratulations and good luck with the next phase in your lives.

I Thank you

13 October 2017, Safari Court, Windhoek, Namibia