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MEDIA RELEASE

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NUST AND RFA SIGN N\$10 MILLION FUNDING AGREEMENT TO ADVANCE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION IN NAMIBIA'S ROAD SECTOR

The Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) and the Road Fund Administration (RFA) formalised an agreement on 20 April 2026 that will see the RFA invest over N\$2 million annually for the next five (5) years. The funding agreement aims to strengthen research, innovation, and capacity development within Namibia's road sector.

The signing of the five-year strategic agreement marks a significant milestone in aligning academic research with national priorities, particularly in addressing the evolving infrastructure challenges related to road funding, maintenance, and sustainability. The partnership will focus on:

- Development of alternative revenue streams, including distance-based road user charges and road user charges for electric vehicles
- Exploration of public-private partnership models to support infrastructure financing
- Research into climate-resilient road infrastructure and funding mechanisms
- Evaluation of sustainable construction materials and cost-effective maintenance approaches
- Strengthening of laboratory capacity and technical research infrastructure.

Translating ideas into viable enterprises

NUST is guided by its mandate to produce high-quality human capital in science and technology, advance research excellence, and foster an entrepreneurial culture that enables students and researchers to translate ideas into viable enterprises. This approach supports Namibia's transition towards a knowledge-based economy, in alignment with Vision 2030 and the National Development Plans.

The collaboration with the RFA speaks directly to this mandate, positioning the partnership as a platform to advance innovation, strengthen collaboration, and contribute to the long-term sustainability of Namibia's road sector.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Prof Andrew Niikondo, Acting Vice-Chancellor of NUST, stated: *"This partnership reflects a shared vision between NUST and the RFA to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and industry application. The University's Directorate of Research, Innovation and Partnerships will facilitate the co-creation of solutions, applied research with real-world impact, and technology-driven innovation."*

Critical enabler of economic growth

The RFA views its partnership with NUST as a strategic intervention to support its mandate of ensuring the sustainable financing of Namibia's road network, which remains a critical enabler of economic growth, trade, and social development.

Namibia's road network continues to rank among the best on the continent; however, increasing funding pressures, rising construction and maintenance costs, and climate-related risks present significant challenges to its long-term sustainability.

In addition, the road sector continues to face a funding gap estimated at approximately N\$3.7 billion for the 2025/2026 financial year, underscoring the urgent need for innovative and sustainable financing solutions. Recent fuel levy relief measures aimed at cushioning consumers from rising living costs are also expected to reduce revenue inflows to the Road Fund, further reinforcing the importance of diversified and resilient funding mechanisms for road infrastructure.

Against this backdrop, the RFA seeks to leverage NUST's academic and research capabilities to develop innovative, evidence-based solutions that enhance the efficiency, resilience, and long-term sustainability of the road sector.

The partnership reflects a deliberate shift toward innovation, research, and practical solutions that respond to the changing realities of the transport sector. As the RFA emphasises, tomorrow's infrastructure cannot continue to be funded with yesterday's mindset.

Importantly, the collaboration recognises that sustainable road maintenance begins long before deterioration occurs, through improved design standards, better materials, quality data, and evidence-based planning, advancing a maintenance-by-design approach to infrastructure development.

The initiative will further promote locally relevant, research-driven solutions by integrating academic expertise with industry experience and Namibia's own operational data, ensuring that home-grown knowledge plays a central role in shaping the future of the road sector.

These efforts align with the RFA's Integrated Strategic Business Plan and national development priorities, including Vision 2030 and the National Development Plans, which recognise infrastructure as a key driver of inclusive economic growth and regional competitiveness.

The collaboration also supports the RFA's strategic objective of strengthening innovation and building human capital within the road sector by creating opportunities for students and young professionals to engage in applied research and real-world infrastructure challenges.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Mr Ali Ipinge, Chief Executive Officer of the RFA, stated: *"This partnership represents a strategic step towards strengthening the sustainability of Namibia's road sector. By integrating research, innovation, and practical application, we are laying the foundation for more efficient funding models, resilient infrastructure, and informed decision-making that will benefit the country in the long term. We cannot continue to fund tomorrow's infrastructure with yesterday's mindset. The future of our road network will be built through collaboration, innovation, and shared purpose."*

Through this partnership, NUST and the RFA reaffirm their commitment to collaboration, innovation, and long-term planning to ensure Namibia's road network remains resilient, efficient, and capable of supporting the country's future growth.

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