



**PAMIBIA UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

WELCOMING REMARKS

BY

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VICE-CHANCELLOR (*PRO TEM*)

AT

OCTOBER GRADUATION

ON

12 OCTOBER 2018

AT

09:00

SAFARI COURT AND HOTEL

Master of Ceremonies and Registrar, Mr Maurice Garde

Council Chairperson, Ms Esi Schimming-Chase, SC

Honourable Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, and

Keynote Speaker today

Honourable Ministers and Members of Parliament and Local Authorities

Your Excellencies Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Distinguished Council Members

Distinguished Guests

Revered Academics, Scholars and Staff of NUST

Proud Parents, Family Members and Friends

Qualified Graduates of NUST

Students of NUST

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am extremely privileged and deeply honoured to welcome you all here today on this very memorable day that celebrates graduates of our university, the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). I'm proud to congratulate the graduates – a distinguished group of mostly young men and

women who are ready to lead and reshape the world. This means progress for Namibia and wherever else their profession or endeavours take them.

I see mothers and grandmothers, fathers and grandfathers, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, friends and relatives here today. This is your special day of joy, too! We are proud of you, thanks for steadfastly carrying your responsibilities in every way, all the way to the end. You have obviously done something wonderful, and for that, Graduates, give a big round of applause to your support base!

Therefore, join me in extending a very warm welcome to all present here today - the members of the Namibian society and especially the NUST family. A distinct note of appreciation goes to our Council Chairperson, Adv Esi Schimming-Chase SC, under whose leadership a strong sense of responsibility and sanity has prevailed. Thank you for your sterling leadership, and also to the Council for the collective wisdom to guide this University to a better future.

And finally an exceptional welcome to our distinguished Keynote Speaker, the Honourable Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister

of International Relations and Cooperation (MIRCO). We recognise your dedication and outstanding contribution to Namibia's liberation and development, and we thank you for joining us today. We surely look forward to your kind words of wisdom and encouragement.

Ladies and gentlemen

Every graduation is an opportunity for reflection, but more so an avenue for thinking and planning for the brave and uncertain future. Thus the words of advice you receive today and tomorrow will help to reshape your future. Clive Staples Lewis, a British writer better known as C.S. Lewis, once said this about graduation: *"There are far, far better things ahead than any we leave behind."*

Distinguished Audience

Graduation brings into focus the essence of a university. We are cognisant of the special role and critical place a technological university occupies in nurturing a new generation of leaders for the new economy. This is an economy to be driven by the 4th Industrial Revolution or what is also referred

to as Industry 4.0. An economy dominated by digital ‘technologies that are fusing the physical, digital and biological worlds, and affecting everything about our existence, in particular economies and industries.’ [Richard van Hooijdonk]

This revolution is changing every aspect of life and is a big opportunity for Africa’s growth if our participation is complete. But simultaneously it is a threat to Africa’s development if our participation in the global economy remains at the margins - as it is today.

This university also has a major role to play in economic and scientific transformations. While the global Research and Development (R&D) expenditure stands at 2.27% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), for Namibia it is a meagre investment of 0.34%. This is much lower than the target of 1% of GDP, which is a benchmark set to develop the scientific contribution to the economy! The ability to increase research and productivity, thereby stimulating economic growth, is critical in order to ensure sustainability in a world defined by an exploding human population. NUST is poised for this engagement.

Therefore, Graduates, on your path to greatness, these are some of the challenges you will face and I absolutely believe that you are well prepared for the eventualities or unforeseen circumstances.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

For me, today is special, because it is my last graduation ceremony with you in my capacity as Vice-Chancellor. As I depart this venerable university, I wish to reflect on my time at NUST and summarize my own and collective legacy of all who built this university. It is a lesson in development.

So how did my journey take this turn?

Firstly, I am extremely grateful to the Namibian government for granting me this opportunity of a lifetime. It is rare for one to create a new university, rarer for a technological university. And I'm extremely grateful for the governors of this university, my colleagues and students and all other stakeholders, without whose steadfast support this success story could not be written. I've been extremely privileged to *'write a book on the making of a university.'* Indeed,

it's been a fantastic journey. Namibia needs to celebrate her success stories, because positivity breeds success; it breeds happiness; it breeds productivity.

My professional life has been devoted entirely to academe. Upon graduation while living in the United States of America, I was spoilt for choice, but I chose the teaching profession. Consequently, my journey first as a professor of chemistry, then as Founding Rector of the Polytechnic of Namibia, and subsequently as Founding Vice-Chancellor of the Namibia University of Science and Technology.

In my interview in 1995 to lead the Polytechnic, I sketched my vision for a *technological university*. Those were very early days because Technikon Namibia had just been renamed as Polytechnic of Namibia and its future hung in the balance: the big question was, what would become of the Polytechnic?

But notable achievements soon followed.

I was young and ambitious, and imaginably idealistic. And in that idealism was the seed that germinated the concept of a technological university. My 23-year tenure here has allowed me to shape the mandate and profile of the

Institution, thus transforming and influencing all its spheres and functions. The resultant transformation was a major achievement that resulted in the shift of public opinion and perception, acceptance and appreciation for the new technological university that fills a huge gap in the economy and the regional higher education landscape.

Secondly, the growth in the key features of the university has been phenomenal; its size, shape and content have been transformed tremendously, in spite of the huge limitations and challenges, chiefly politics and resourcing. The following list of major achievements summarises the Institution's transformation:

1. The institution has been transformed completely from being essentially a *business college* to now being a *technological university*. In 1995 there were no qualifications higher than the 3-year National Diploma.
2. Today, most programmes lead to the Honours or Professional Degree and many lead further to Master's and Doctoral degrees.
3. More than two-thirds of our qualifications are in the STEM fields (that is, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). All the qualifications

are benchmarked internationally and some are accredited internationally as well.

4. Enrollment has grown six-fold since 1995, from about 2 000 to 12 000 students, and international students are an important part of the student body, which we highly appreciate. To date, the university has produced more than 34 000 graduates (headcount), all who occupy a special place in the market, locally and internationally.
5. Scientific research hardly existed in the Technikon. It was cultivated during the Polytechnic era and is now a basis for knowledge creation and sharing within the university and a medium for international engagements.
6. The university has been a leader in embedding the technology in all its programmes and functions, and is a leader in technology education in Namibia.
7. Land holdings have grown six-fold, now standing at about 18 hectares.
8. The asset base grew from about N\$ 27 million to more than N\$ 1 billion.
9. The university has a strong international profile, featuring more than 120 active partnerships internationally. Our campus reflects an international character in staff members' profile, and in the countless number of scholars and students exchanged. This is excellent for the internationalisation of higher education.

10. Currently, NUST is ranked at No. 28 amongst the top 100 universities in Africa and No. 1 in Namibia (according to **4icu Ranking**). It is continually rated as the best tertiary education institution in Namibia (since 2002, **PMR.africa**). In the past four years, the University has been rated twice as the most innovative institution in Namibia. Consequently, the university has received many local and international awards for its sterling performance.

All in all, these are major milestones achieved in the face of huge challenges and stumbling blocks, thanks to the singular dedication and contributions of all stakeholders.

So what defines my legacy?

I believe in the motto: *“Leadership is action, not position,”* by Donald McGannon. A small frame with this inscription, which I bought in Philadelphia, USA in 1995 upon my appointment, permanently hangs in my office. It is a constant reminder of our fleeting time in any position that requires a sense of abiding urgency and contemplative action.

Where the Institution was in 1995 and where it stands today are two different worlds. NUST is highly respected in Namibia and in the league of universities internationally, and is an attractive partner for research, funding and international exchanges. This is a very positive development for Namibia.

What were the challenges?

But any organization faces many challenges at any given time. New organisations face more challenges because they have to create new systems and survive inception: *invention* is much harder than *conveyancing*. Here is cursory view of the main challenges over time:

- a. One of the **early** challenges was the *culture change* in the organisation, which saw resistance to change from a *passive* management style to *proactive, hands-on* management style.
- b. The **second** challenge was the resistance to this *new concept* of a technological university, resulting mainly from certain quarters of society.

- c. The **third** challenge was resourcing, which has to do with availability of skills in the market and funding. This challenge continues to persist but under somewhat different economic conditions.
- d. The **fourth** challenge has been intermittent bad governance and politics driven by certain key persons.

So what is the lesson? I had big dreams and I have achieved all the major goals and many small ones that I had set out for myself and the University. But NUST could have done more if we were adequately resourced and supported throughout my tenure. Nonetheless, we prevailed and broke new grounds and NUST is a rising star. I'm very satisfied.

What is the Future of the University?

I close with a cautionary note:

- i. A small economy with a small budget will always have challenges with resources, leading to the obvious conclusion that the little we receive must go a long way. Therefore, the concept of best practice, efficiency and effectiveness. Unfortunately, Namibia has a long way to get there! Let us remember that world-class universities are the

engines of economic development globally. Fact is, excellent education from an excellent university is indeed the foundation of a “good economy.” Namibians should aim for a state of excellence.

- ii. NUST is well-positioned for the future. But all the gains of the leadership and attributes of the university will be in vain if *politics and mediocrity*, and not *competence, performance and excellence* are the benchmark of employment and success. We need to professionalise, depersonalise and depoliticise the education sector. Otherwise, any university will be just another failed organisation or pseudo-political platform. And that’s the end of the meaning of a true university. That’s how a universities are stymied and killed.

Finally, Distinguished Audience

Outliers and pioneers are often seen as heretics because they spin new or radical ideas and this creates uncertainties by changing ‘comfortable circumstances.’ That’s why people generally resist change. By this I mean that things could have happened faster and with better support. But I know that in

development, resistance is always a factor we have to deal with and overcome. Therefore, we didn't lose hope and the wins came one after the other. A sterling record is there for all to see.

I achieved all the major milestones I set for myself and the university. And now this is a defining moment in the timeframe given me. I wish upon the University and its future leadership, and future generations of students and graduates the strong reputation and all the successes they deserve!

Once again, I welcome you all warmly to this memorable event and congratulate you all on your successes!

I thank you.

- Ends.