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Wednesday, 26 March 2025

Media Release | NUST to recognise global tourism leader with honorary doctorate

The Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) last Thursday, 20 March 2025, hosted a public lecture delivered by Mr Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UN Tourism). The event – themed ‘Sustainable Tourism in Africa: Harnessing Technology, Inclusion, and Heritage for a Resilient Future’ – brought together key tourism stakeholders, academics, and students, fostering meaningful discussions on building a more sustainable and universally accessible tourism industry.

A key highlight of the event was an announcement by Vice-Chancellor Prof Eroid Naomab that NUST will confer an honorary Doctor of Philosophy (honoris causa) degree in Tourism Management upon Mr Pololikashvili at the upcoming May graduation ceremony. This esteemed recognition acknowledges his exceptional leadership and profound impact on the global tourism sector.

Mr Pololikashvili has been the Secretary-General of UN Tourism since 2018. A Georgian politician, diplomat and international civil servant, he has played a significant role in global tourism and diplomacy and has worked tirelessly to promote this sector as a key driver of sustainable development and economic growth. His leadership has been instrumental in pushing forward global initiatives to revitalise tourism in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

His public lecture outlined his role in establishing a crisis response team at UN Tourism to drive the global recovery of the tourism sector in the aftermath of the pandemic, a process that began with a visit to Namibia in 2020. He further underscored his commitment to people-centred leadership, emphasising the need for investment not only in infrastructure, but also in human capital. “You can build buildings, you can build airports, but you need people – qualified people,” he said.

Prof Naomab underscored the significance of thought leadership in shaping the discourse around sustainable tourism, technology, inclusion, and heritage. He emphasised the role of tourism as a catalyst for economic growth, poverty reduction, and social inclusion, stating: “Tourism used to be characterised by an emphasis on leisure and service to attract tourists – at the expense of largely poor communities. Namibia, however, is a renowned pioneer in conservation-based tourism, empowering local communities through its Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programme. Now, it is time to transform the sector so that it positions itself to serve as an engine for advancing sustainable development across all sectors”.

The lecture was well-attended by members of the public, the campus community, various captains of industry as well as His Excellency Albertus Aochamub, Ambassador of the Republic of Namibia to France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Monaco, and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO and UN Tourism.

As an affiliate member of UN Tourism, NUST continues to play a pivotal role in shaping the future of Namibia’s tourism industry through education, partnerships, and thought leadership. The University is also exploring collaborations with the UN Tourism Online Academy to provide high-quality learning opportunities that enhance critical skill sets and future-proof Namibia’s tourism workforce.

The public lecture was held in collaboration with UN Tourism, the Namibian Government, the Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board (NIPDB) and the Namibia Tourism Board (NTB).

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