



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

STATEMENT BY HON. LUCIA IIPUMBU, MP

MINISTER OF INDUSTRIALISATION AND TRADE

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE
OKAKARARA VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE'S INNOVATION
AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP WEEK**

***THEME: "EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES THROUGH INDIGENOUS
CO-DESIGN ADDED VALUE"***

DATE: 21 AUGUST 2024

VENUE : OKAKARARA VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE

Director of Proceedings – Ms. Soniah Shitaleni

Honourable James Unomasa Uerikua - Governor of Otjozondjupa Region,

Hon. Samuelling Ngairo – Mayor of Okakarara

Hon. Abdal Mutjavikua - Constituency Councilor of Okakarara Constituency,

Mr. Eric Fundula Nenghwanya – CEO of NTA

Mr. Moses Tjirare - Centre Manager of Okakarara VTC

Distinguished Invited Guests,

Representatives of Okakarara Vocational Training Centre,

Residents of Okakarara,

Members of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

1. It gives me great pleasure to be here this morning to witness this remarkable event – the Official Opening of the Okakarara Vocational Training Centre's Innovation and Entrepreneurship Week under the perfect theme: “Empowering Communities through Indigenous Co-Design Added Value”. In essence, we are here to celebrate and lay good foundation of our cumulative and smart partnership approach towards MSMEs and enterprise development in Namibia.
2. At the onset, allow me to sincerely applaud the organisers of this noble initiative and this is indeed a confirmation that Namibians are committed to innovate targeted interventions aimed at empowering our communities at grass root in order to bring about inclusivity and drive sustainable development in the Namibian house where no one must not feel left out.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. Innovation and entrepreneurship are the engines of economic growth and development. They are the driving forces that shape our economy to further create the much needed jobs, and inspire the next generation of entrepreneurs. In a rapidly changing world which we live in, it is essential that we harness our local resources, skills, and knowledge to create solutions that not only serve our people but also resonate with our cultural heritage.
4. Advancing innovation and technological capacities is a precondition necessary to bring about the required level of a knowledge based economy. We are therefore imploring on vocational training centres across the country to consider moving towards curriculum reviews in order to create new avenues for businesses and industries in a number of sectors including the emerging sectors of Oil and Gas and Renewable energy.
5. The Okakarara VTC for many years has produced a huge number of diverse graduates in various fields with some having grown to become self-employed large enterprises while some have remained small struggling for survival and seeking for jobs opportunities. We therefore need to change this narrative collectively to ensure that vocational training becomes key in addressing unemployment and advance manufacturing and entrepreneurship in our country. We must further remain resolute in ensuring that we mainstream our indigenous knowledge and products to form part of the new economic revolution of innovative ideas and value added products and services.

6. We are also aware that most graduates continues to face various challenges and key among others is access to financing and other resources to bring their ideas to fruition and grow. This lack of access to capital has been cited as a major factor limiting the growth of many innovative business endeavors. We therefore need multiple stakeholders to work together to tackle these issues head on to create enterprises that can thrive in the global, knowledge-based economy of the future.
7. I am happy to note that the Namibia Training Authority continues to play a significant role through channeling funds generated through the VET Levy to effectively fulfill its mandate of establishing an equitable, accessible and efficient national training regime. We must therefore ensure that we prioritises the provision of sufficient resources to centres like Okakarara VTC who are committed to ensuring that ICT and innovation remain key in the roll out of their programmes.
8. The theme of this week, "Empowering Communities through Indigenous Co-Design Added Value," is a call to action for all of us. It challenges us to rethink how we approach development including vocational training in general by recognising and incorporating the wisdom, skills, and traditions of our indigenous communities.
9. Indigenous co - design is more than just collaboration; it is about partnership. It is about respecting and valuing the input of those who have lived on and shaped this land for generations. By combining modern technology with indigenous knowledge, we can create products and services that are not only innovative but also sustainable and culturally relevant.

10. These will stimulate new ideas and provide guidelines in solving most of the challenges especially in most of our rural communities towards finding innovative ways in dealing with various challenges. As you may all be aware our departed President His Excellency Dr. Hage G. Geingob, was very intentional in making sure that technology and innovation takes centre stage.
11. He then appointed a 4IR Task Team which conducted a country assessment to determine the readiness of Namibia for 4IR, and made recommendations towards a coordinated and coherent policy and legislative framework. These is a clear indication that Government is very committed to ensuring that ICT and innovation take centre stage in the development of the country going forward.

Ladies and Gentlemen

12. Our MSMEs are the roots of the economy and if supported and developed they grow into larger companies with a great contribution to the country's GDP. A well skilled and equipped MSME can contribute significantly to the economy in terms of job creation, local value addition and economic growth of a country. Hence this in line with the MIT's mandate and efforts to improve Namibia's business and investment climate and therefore contribute to economic growth.
13. In addition, it is imperative that our efforts should strive to ensure that we develop enterprises, at all levels that can create social impact and are attuned to the sustainable economic growth and development. It is also vital that both the public and private sectors continues to generate market

intelligence that can advance our economy towards new avenues and sectors of growth.

14. The Ministry of Industrialisation and Trade has developed various interventions aimed at empowering business and drive business development in particular.
15. MIT's support is pegged on our National MSME Policy, which provides guidance on how the country should support our MSMEs. Furthermore, the Ministry is currently finalising an Informal Economy and Entrepreneurship National Policy to cover the uniformalised sections of our entrepreneurs as well as our youthful start-ups and general entrepreneurship. This policy is also included in the Harambee Prosperity Plan and is to be accompanied by an attendant Act of Parliament later on which provides ample space for ensuring the mainstreaming of incentives and business infrastructure for our MSMEs both formal and informal.
16. The Ministry is also supporting the directive on local procurement and indeed, it is through the local sourcing of our various proudly made in Namibia products and services that our entrepreneurs can thrive. We are ardent advocate for Public Procurement through our Buy Local Grow Namibia initiative which has resulted in the launch of the Namibian Bar code.
17. The Ministry has also initiated other interventions – such as Equipment Aid Scheme, Industrial Upgrading Modernisation Programme, StartUp Hub and Digital Centre, EMPRETEC Namibia as well as the SDG Impact Facility.

18. The StartUp and digital Centre is key to ensure that we promote and develop our Namibian StartUps to ensure the development of a digital economy, innovation and StartUps result in structural transformation and drive our industrialisation agenda.
19. EMPRETEC Namibia is a collaboration with UNDP Namibia with the explicit aim to avert the very low entrepreneurial outcomes of our country. The aim is to train our MSMEs and larger enterprises including vocational training graduates into appropriate entrepreneurial behaviour to ensure that they can create sustainable business going forward.
20. Comrade Governor, when we reintroduced our Equipment Aid Scheme Programme last year, which was widely advertised, a total number of 671 applications were received from across the country. The Ministry received only a total number of 27 applications from Otjozondjupa region of which 22 met the requirements and were approved while we received more than 100 applications from other regions
21. This cohort of EAS targeted the Manufacturing (including Garment & Metal Fabrication), Agro-Food processing, Gemstone and Dimension Stone Processing (including small-scale mining), Pharmaceutical & Cosmetics, and Refrigeration and Air Conditioning (Heating, Ventilation and Cooling sector). I am mentioning these because most falls within the VTC training curriculum and we see no reason why our graduates do not access these opportunities.
22. We are therefore saying despite various opportunities provided by government most of our MSMEs still lags behind in terms of grasping these much-needed interventions for their businesses to scale hence let us work together from all dimensions to make an impact.

23. There is a general consensus that technology and innovation are at the heart of development, and that investment in this sphere is critical to ensuring long-term growth. Let utilise the hard learned lessons from the COVID – 19 pandemic and the eminent drought we are currently facing to innovate in new ways of doing things to improve our livelihoods and those of our communities.
24. In closing, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the organizers of this event, the staff of the Okakarara Vocational Training Centre, and all the participants who have made this week possible. Your dedication and commitment to is truly commendable.
25. Let us use this week as a springboard for greater collaboration and innovation. Let us work together to unlock the full potential of our indigenous knowledge and resources, and in doing so, create a brighter future for all Namibians.
26. It is now my honour to declare the Okakarara Vocational Training Centre's Innovation and Entrepreneurship Week officially open.

I THANK YOU