

CEC CONFERENCE

(27-30 August 2017)

Welcoming Remarks by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Namibia, Professor Lazarus Hangula, on the Occasion of the Opening of the Conference of Council for Education in the Commonwealth in Namibia

- The Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly and Founding Vice Chancellor of the University of Namibia, Professor Peter Katjavivi
- Hon. Dr Ndjoze Ojo, Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Training and Innovation
- Our distinguished and Special Guests, Members of the Council for Education in the Commonwealth-
 - The Rt. Hon. Patricia Scotland, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth
 - Dr Joanna Newman, Secretary General of the Association of Commonwealth Universities;
 - Prof. Richard Mawditt, OBE, and an old friend of UNAM
 - Mr Sonny Leong, Commander of the Order of the British Empire
 - Sir Alastair Niven, Trustee of the Council for Education in the Commonwealth and Fellow of Harris Manchester College, University of Oxford.
- Honourable Ministers; Honourable Members of Parliament here present
- The Executive Director of the National Council for Higher Education, Mr. Mocks Shivute
- Her Excellency British High Commissioner to Namibia, Ms Jo Lomas
- Your Excellencies: Members of the Diplomatic Corps
- Fellow University Presidents and Vice Chancellors
- [and I wish to acknowledge the presence of-
 - Professor Mabel Imbuga, Vice Chancellor of Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, in Kenya, one of the Centres of Excellence of the African University; she is also an external member of the University of Namibia Council;
 - Professor Tjama Tjivikua, Vice Chancellor of Namibia University of Science and Technology;
 - Professor Kingo Mchombu, Acting Vice Chancellor: International University of Management;
- The Chairperson of UNAM Council, Mr Sam Shivute
- UNAM Pro Vice Chancellors (Prof. Gideon, Prof. Matengu and Dr Namhila) and all members of UNAM Management and Staff.
- Distinguished Professor Judith Hall, representing UNAM's special and strategic partner - Cardiff University, UK;
- Dean of Faculty of Education Dr. Charmaine Villet and all members of the local organizing Committee;

- Distinguished Academics
- Distinguished Conference Speakers and Facilitators
- Representatives of Government Institutions
- Captains of Businesses and Industries
- Distinguished Invited Guests
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the organizing institutions, that is, the Council for Education in the Commonwealth (CEC) and the hosting local institutions – the University of Namibia (UNAM) and the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), it gives me great pleasure and a distinct honour to warmly welcome you all, our distinguished guests, to Namibia and to the start of this very important and historic event - the staging of the Council for Education in the Commonwealth Conference - here in the Namibian capital city Windhoek.

This is a special conference that comes with a special and distinguished guest for the first time to Namibia – the Rt. Hon Patricia Scotland. Let us give her a thunderous welcome.

I also wish to recognize the presence of the Deputy Minister and now also serving as Acting Minister of Higher Education, Training and Innovation, Hon Dr Becky Ndjoze-Ojo. Please allow me also at this juncture to single out all the distinguished members of Council for Education in the Commonwealth for honoring us with their presence and for having taken a historic decision to organize the CEC conference in Namibia, having the University of Namibia as host.

My special welcome to the ladies and gentlemen of Council for Education in the Commonwealth is coupled with sincere votes of thanks for the special honour they have bestowed on Namibia and UNAM through the holding of this first ever conference outside London here in Windhoek in more than fifty (50) years of the Council's existence! This year and month, UNAM will be celebrating 25 years of her existence on 30th August, which is also the closing date of this historic conference. We view, thus, the holding of this CEC conference here on the borrowed premises of Namibia's first national university as a special birthday gift for UNAM! In a way it is. In this regard I would like to express our profound gratitude to both the Secretary General of the Commonwealth and the Secretary General of the Association of Commonwealth Universities, and to Prof. Mawditt as well as to Vice Chancellor Imbuga for their invaluable contribution to UNAM's growth over the 25 years of her existence.

Ladies and gentlemen, our conference has for a theme *Leading the elephant out of the bush - Education and Business together bridging the gap.*

I don't know exactly what it means. In as much as I believe that attempts will be made to contextualize this theme to Namibia, it is, certainly up to this colourful conference to determine the exact meaning in a global context.

In the Indo-European cultural context the word *elephant* has nuances and flavours of symbolic meanings that denote a problem or the uncontrollable as evidenced by expressions such as *elephas maximus*, 'elephant in the room' or 'elephant in the porcelain house', 'Pyrrhus victory', and the like.

Similar expressions are also found in some African languages such as the Oshiwambo expression: *Nge inau dala ondjaba*, literally meaning 'if the time before a planned event does not give birth to an elephant'.

But the *idiosyncrasy* and metaphor of the elephant is not only one of an uncontrollable and destructive animal; but is also of a caring and helpful animal, as depicted in some African children stories. And, seen from another perspective, what a wonderful coincide between the topic of the conference and the Council for Education in the Commonwealth meeting outside London for the first time in more than fifty years of its existence! Is this another elephant coming out of the bush?! So let us explore!

Ladies and gentlemen:

In as much as we may have come from different cultural backgrounds, not by our own choice but by unchangeable socio historical contingencies, we are here because we see ourselves as people with commonalities and to affirm the common values that glue us together into Commonwealth; and also as people who can discuss issues of mutual concern to mutually inform and educate one another in our globalized and even more globalizing world; and where, as they say, 'education is the greatest equalizer'!

So let us unpack the content of our rich topic.

Finally, as I, once again, warmly welcome you all and thank you for gracing this ceremony with your presence, please allow me also at this juncture to thank the local organizing committee for the job so far well done!

Thank you all!