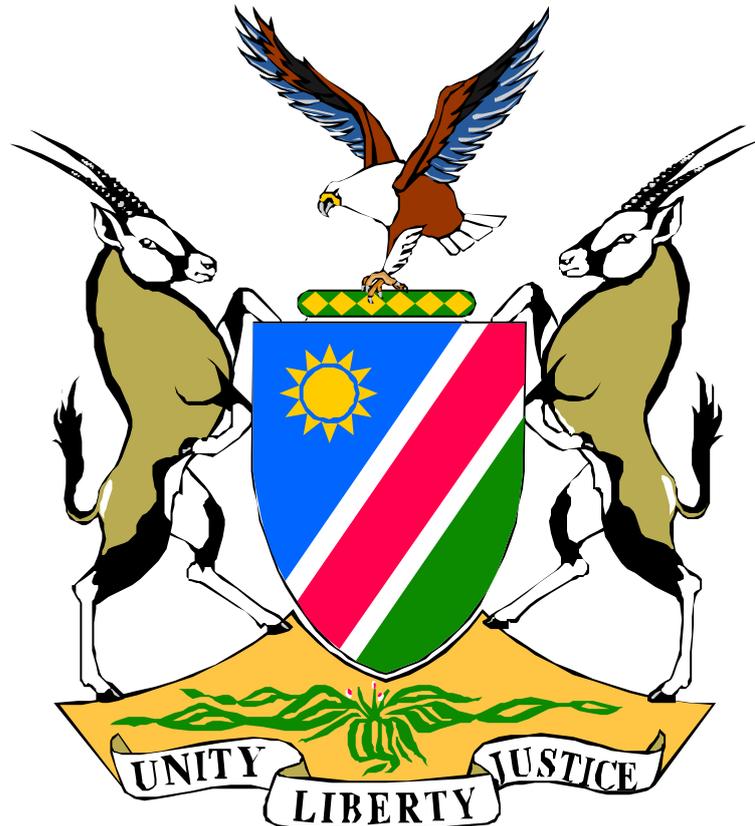


REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY
HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBWA,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
ON THE OCCASION OF ADDRESSING THE 18TH
GRADUATION CEREMONY OF THE UNIVERSITY
OF NAMIBIA AND HIS ACCEPTANCE OF THE
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREE *Honouris Causa***

13 MAY 2011

WINDHOEK

**Director of Ceremonies,
 Your Excellency, Dr Sam Nujoma, Founding President, Father of the Nation and Chancellor
 of the University of Namibia
 Esteemed Vice Chancellor of UNAM,
 Esteemed Chairperson of the University Council,
 Esteemed Members of the University Council,
 Honourable Ministers,
 Honourable Members of Parliament,
 Honourable Governor of Khomas Region,
 Your Worship, the Mayor of the City of Windhoek
 Dear Graduates,
 Distinguished Invited Guests,
 Members of the Media,
 Ladies and Gentlemen,**

First of all, I would like to thank the Vice-Chancellor, the Chairperson of the University Council and all others who played an active role for me to be awarded this wonderful honour, namely, the Doctor of Philosophy *Honouris Causa*. I feel honoured and privileged to stand before you today.

Through the Citation that he just delivered, the esteemed Vice-Chancellor Professor Hangula has ably taken you on the journey that took me from the place of my birth at Okanghudi, to countries beyond Namibia's border in search of freedom, and to the contributions that I have made to the task of nation building after the attainment of our nation's freedom and independence in 1990.

Thus, I wish to state that my being here today is the result of the difficult political circumstances that characterised our country's history and the personal decisions that I have made in dealing with those circumstances.

Furthermore, I wish to state that I am being honoured today because of the work that my Comrades-in-arms during the national liberation struggle and I carried out in serving Namibia and her people, before and after independence. For me, this work started during my early years as a herd boy, a contract worker, a political activist, a freedom fighter, a Cabinet Minister in the post-independence dispensation and eventually, as Head of State, over the past seven years.

Director of Ceremonies,

I accept this honour on behalf of the Namibian people, and my comrades-in-arms, with whom I shared the trenches and crossed the rivers and the jungles during the liberation struggle. I view it as an encouragement for me to continue leading our nation towards the attainment of our national development goals and objectives.

I wish to dedicate this honour and recognition to the ongoing efforts of the Namibian people and those of our Government in doing what is necessary to propel our nation forward towards the realisation of our development goals and objectives.

I dedicate it to our youth as an encouragement for them to study harder, to reject the social evils of crime and drug abuse, and to remain focussed on pursuits that are aimed at building a better future for themselves and for future generations.

Director of Ceremonies,

The journey that brought me here has been long. It has not been easy and I did not travel it alone. Along the way, I have met and worked with many people. Some are my own countrymen and women, while others were total strangers. All these people have impacted my life in many ways. I have learnt lessons that I will never forget and I have acquired wisdom that has helped me in many ways.

They have provided invaluable support and companionship on the journey that I have travelled to date. To all of them, I say: Thank you. First, I wish to wholeheartedly thank my dear wife, Penehupifo Pohamba for the love, care, support and companionship that she has given to me over the years.

I thank my entire family for their love and support. I also wish to single out my dear long time friend and Comrade Dr Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma, for many years of camaraderie, leadership and mentorship. As the eminent leader of Namibia's national liberation struggle, he led with dedication and unwavering courage. He greatly inspired me and thousands of Namibian compatriots to persevere, until final victory was won. For this we will forever remain grateful.

There are many other comrades and friends who are just too many to mention. I have in mind revolutionaries and freedom fighters such as Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, Simon Mzee Kaukungwa, John ya Otto Nankudhu, Theo-Ben Gurirab, Hage Geingob, Nahas Angula, and numerous others. Some are still alive and others have passed on. I thank them all sincerely. I also thank all the Namibian people. I accept this honour on your behalf.

Director of Ceremonies,

For a generation such as ours, which did not have the opportunities to receive tertiary education, this is a memorable moment.

It reminds us of the opportunities that we were denied in our own country during those years, while at the same time, showing us the possibilities that the younger and future generations now have to realise their human potential.

More than anything else, this honour is a tribute to the thousands of Namibian countrymen and women who sacrificed their lives and shed their precious blood so that our people can live in peace and security; so that Namibian children can have an opportunity to receive education; so that, together, we as Namibians can build a better society for all.

For the most part of my adult life, I have had the honour to serve the Namibian people, both during the liberation struggle within SWAPO of Namibia and after the attainment of independence. This has given me a deep appreciation of the challenges that have faced our nation and those that continue to confront us today.

This appreciation provides me, as President, with the compass to steer our Government and our nation to keep moving in the right direction. It inspires me to dedicate my energy and to work hard, day and night with my colleagues in Government and to leave no stone unturned in our collective efforts to accelerate the social and economic development of our nation.

Director of Ceremonies,

I have been intimately associated with Namibia's national struggle for freedom and independence for many years. I have also been honoured to serve the Namibian people in many capacities after the attainment of our nationhood.

In these roles, I have witnessed our nation's growth from a nascent democracy, to a flourishing democratic State that enjoys both regional and international recognition in many areas. Our policies and programmes have been lauded by international observers and analysts who have commended us for the good work that we are doing in several aspects of public administration. This should inspire our Government and our public institutions, including this University, to strive for higher levels of excellence in all that we do.

We can only achieve the vision of building a better society if we work together to put in place mechanisms and provide the conditions where all our people can achieve their human potential; where our people are free from poverty and hunger; and where all Namibians have access to the basic amenities such as clean drinking water, decent housing, electricity, health care and education.

In order to honour the sacred memories of those who sacrificed their lives so that we may live in freedom, we must consistently strive to overcome the challenges of unemployment, landlessness, homelessness and other forms of social or economic deprivation that face many Namibians today. It is also imperative that we do all that we can to build a society where our women, children, and other vulnerable persons can conduct their daily activities in safety and security.

Moreover, the vast natural resources that our country is endowed with should be harnessed for the equitable benefit of all our people. This implies socio-economic equity and fairness in the distribution of opportunities.

This is the only way Namibia can shed the stigma of being one of the countries with the highest levels of income inequality in the world. It is unjustifiable that the majority of the country's population should live in difficult conditions of poverty and under-development, while a few live in luxury.

One way in which we can address social and economic inequities in our country is by ensuring that our people, especially the previously disadvantaged communities are provided with high quality education.

It is for this reason that, even during the national liberation struggle, under the leadership of Comrade Nujoma, we had decided to give high priority to the education and training of our young people.

This dedication continued after the attainment of our freedom and independence in 1990 to date. As a result, education continues to constantly receive the largest portion of the national budget. We will continue to improve our education system at all levels from pre-primary to tertiary institutions of learning. Without any doubt, this is one of the best way in which we can achieve our national development goals and Vision 2030. Institutions of tertiary education such as the University of Namibia have an important role to play in these endeavours.

Currently, our Government is implementing the *Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme* (ETSIP), which is aimed at addressing the issues of equity, access and the quality of education that is provided to our young people.

Steps have also been taken to address the shortage of text books in our primary and secondary schools, while new class rooms, laboratories, and accommodation facilities for teachers have also been built and continue to be built across the country.

Our aim is to build and reinforce the foundation of our education system and prepare learners so that when they enrol at tertiary education institutions such as this University, they can complete their academic careers successfully.

Director of Ceremonies,

I am proud that more than one thousand nine hundred and fifty (1,950) young people have graduated from the University of Namibia today. The graduation ceremonies started yesterday and are continuing here today. I take this opportunity to congratulate my fellow graduates and their families on their wonderful achievements. I view this graduation as a welcome contribution to the development of human resources capacity in our country. It is an indication that our country continues to make positive strides towards the empowerment of more Namibians through education.

With this graduation, Namibia has gained a crop of trained professionals who will further boost our country's capacity to plan better, to manage more efficiently and to become more competitive, both regionally and internationally.

I urge you, the graduates, to go and use your skills to contribute towards the social and economic development of our country, the upliftment of our communities and the betterment of our country.

I am also proud that despite the challenges facing us, progress has been made in many areas of social and economic development. Our country continues to enjoy peace and security since the attainment of our national freedom and independence twenty one years ago.

These are important prerequisites that are necessary for our people to contribute effectively to the process of nation building.

Director of Ceremonies,

I stand before this gathering as a recipient of an outstanding honour from this institution. On this important occasion, I wish to say that, this will remain a memorable day in my life. I would therefore, like once again, to thank the University of Namibia for bestowing this honour upon me today. I accept it with all humility and gratitude. I am confident that this institution will continue to grow in the coming years and successfully develop well-trained and competent graduates for our nation.

Once again, I accept this award with honour and humility.

I thank you