

POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA

Press Release

Date: 04 April 2008

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POLYTECHNIC SETTING THE SCENE FOR INNOVATION CENTRE

The Polytechnic of Namibia's plans to establish Namibia's first innovation centre gained further impetus on Wednesday with the launch of a three-day stakeholders' workshop involving foreign and local experts and business leaders from industry and the small business sector.

Commenting on the pioneering initiative, Dr. Tjama Tjivikua, Rector of the Polytechnic, said that Government and other stakeholders had long recognised the key role small and medium enterprises (SMEs) could play in supporting national development objectives such as job creation, economic growth and diversification. However, he added, most SMEs have yet to fulfil their potential. He provided compelling evidence indicating innovation has boosted developed economies even through SMEs.

"Inadequate business know-how, frequent inaccessibility and unavailability of support systems, and a critical lack of entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge are major challenges facing SMEs in Namibia. Innovation is a proven stimulant for the formation of new businesses in a knowledge economy. It also gives fresh impetus to established businesses and has the power to re-energise national economic growth. To build and sustain local business innovation capacity, it is essential that we have a knowledge-based environment and a centre with the expertise, the resources and the dedication to promote business innovation and nurture entrepreneurial talent amongst small and fledgling businesses," Dr Tjivikua added.

Commenting on international collaboration, Dr. Tjivikua expressed his profound gratitude to all willing to assist in establishing such a centre thereby promoting an environment conducive to investment and expertise, as would be facilitated by the Namibian Business Innovation Centre (NBIC).

The NBIC will combine expertise and resources from leading technology providers, local business and Government and international partners. It will also provide advanced

knowledge and technologies to the Namibian Industry at large to enhance its innovative capabilities and strengthen its competitive advantage in the region and globally.

A feasibility study undertaken in 2006 by the Polytechnic in collaboration with Technopolis Finland was funded by the Embassy of Finland in Windhoek. The study confirmed the need for a business innovation centre in Namibia. Given its commitment to fostering innovation and sustainable development, the Polytechnic firmly took the lead in conceptualising and driving the idea of establishing the Innovation Centre.

The workshop held from 2-4 April was attended by many stakeholders and featured presenters from GTZ, the University of Applied Sciences in Brandenburg, Germany, and VDI/VDE Innovation Technik GmbH, also from Germany. Participants included Polytechnic staff and members of the business community.

Said Ms. Eeva Hiltunen, Programme Officer at the Embassy of Finland: *“We also want our support to be catalytic in the sense that it creates and initiates new processes, new ideas and new practices for the benefit of Namibians, so that it creates positive change, that is - development. Therefore, our support to the creation of the Namibia Business Innovation Centre fits our purposes very well... I'm very glad to see that such a big group of stakeholders and partners are present here today from the wide range of sectors of society. In innovation, networking is the key to success, because innovations very rarely can be made alone, as we know. On the contrary, innovations are often born when the best skills of surprising partners are combined.”*

- End.