



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

**THE MINISTER OF SPORT, YOUTH AND NATIONAL
SERVICE**

HON. ERASTUS A. UUTONI

**AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE TECHNICAL
WORKSHOP OF COMMONWEALTH HIGHER
EDUCATION CONSORTIUM FOR YOUTH WORK
HOSTED BY NAMCOL**

ON: 08 May 2019, Windhoek

Thank you very much, Programme Director,

- Mr Justin Ellis, Chairperson of the NAMCOL Board of Governors and other members of the NAMCOL Board present here this morning;
- Dr. Heroldt Murangi, Director of NAMCOL
- Mrs. Emma- Kantema Gaomas, Executive Director in the MSYNS
- Management and staff of NAMCOL
- Mr Layne Robinson, Head of Social Policy Development at the Commonwealth Secretariat;
- Officials from the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth of Learning, the United Kingdom National Youth Agency and the United Kingdom Professional Association of Lecturers in Youth and Community Work;
- Distinguished Participants and Specially Invited Guests
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very much honour to have been invited to officiate at this official opening of this training programme organised by the Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work and hosted by the Namibian College of Open Learning, NAMCOL.

From the onset, I would like to wholeheartedly comment NAMCOL for hosting this important workshop and trust that our visitors and participants have found the facilities useful and equally are enjoying the Namibian hospitality. I would encourage the host institution, that if an opportunity presents itself, kindly to introduce our visitors to Windhoek's landmark places such as the Independence Museum and the Heroes Acre which are our principal monuments.

Director of Proceedings;

This workshop I am informed came at an opportune time when profound efforts are being made all over Africa to build **The Africa We Want**. It is therefore extremely topical as it aims to build a cohort of Youth Workers for East and Southern Africa, which are properly empowered to engage and support young people.

This particular moment and gathering remind us on our President's constant reminder that **Namibia is the child of International solidarity**. Indeed, our association with the Commonwealth has started long before Namibia's independence when a memorable **Chief Emeka Anyaoku**, the then Commonwealth Secretary General put into place, a Commonwealth Technical Assistance Programme that provided training for about **8,500 (Eight Thousand Five Hundred)** Namibians all over the world to move into administrative and other critical posts at Namibia's independence. It was therefore logical for us to join the Commonwealth as the 50th member at independence on 21 March 1990.

Our continuing relationship with the Commonwealth is strengthened by the synergy between our Constitution and the Commonwealth Charter both of which are anchored on democracy, human rights, the rule of law and find expression in the commitment to develop free and democratic societies.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Today, we have the privilege of welcoming participants from Botswana, Malawi, South Africa, Uganda and Namibia at this important occasion. May I therefore, take the opportunity to express my sympathy to our friends from Malawi and South Africa whose people suffered immense human and material losses as a result of natural disasters. About 2 months ago, the intense tropical cyclone **Idai**, tore through our sister countries of Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe causing catastrophic damage and leaving more than 1,000 people dead and thousands more missing. Thus, as we gathered here this morning, our thoughts and prayers go out to these nations, especially Mozambique, who has to bear the effect of yet another cyclone, **Kenneth**, landing in areas that have never known such phenomenon in recorded history.

In that regard, I am happy to note that the last Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting convened in London in April 2018 under the theme “*Towards a Common Future*”, focused on topical issues facing the Commonwealth family of nations such as: climate change, the blue ocean charter, a fair trading system, good governance, youth unemployment, cyber--security and poverty reduction. These issues are central to Namibia’s interest and national development plans.

This workshop therefore, gives me hope that the ideas you will generate during the workshop will greatly support a community of practice that can only enrich the Youth Work programme and promote the professionalization of the sector. I must acknowledge that in many

Commonwealth countries, including Namibia, Youth Work is still an emerging discipline that needs to take greater root in the youth and national development strategy.

In this regard, the **2018 Biennial Report of the Commonwealth Secretary General** observed that Youth Ministers provide inputs for the incorporation into national development plans and government policies of clearly defined and appropriate commitments by national governments to invest in Youth Development.

In that context, I would like to thank the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth of Learning and the University of the West Indies who together lead the Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work. Also, I wish to greatly appreciate the National Youth Agency of the UK, and the UK Professional Association of Lecturers in Youth and Community Work who teamed up with the Consortium to deliver this training workshop.

Director of Proceedings, Distinguish Invited Guest;

The capacity of young people for creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship and adaptability, is widely recognized as vital in stimulating a renewed and sustainable return to social and economic well-being in member states to provide a more inclusive society. Thus, investing in the development of professional youth workers will bring together, at local and national levels, the persons with the right skills and approaches to engage and unleash the potential of our young people while addressing their unique needs.

We at the Ministry of Sport, Youth and National Service are particularly pleased to see that Youth Work now has a rightful place in the academic and development fields, not only at **diploma level** but also at a **degree level**. Therefore, we recognize the potential of the youth work degree programme that is targeting government staff and other interested persons with

the skills and knowledge to lead youth empowerment work in our countries. Indeed, the Ministry encourages the graduates of this program to apply for position such as youth officers in the in the Ministry when such vacancies arise.

On this challenging journey, the Ministry of Sport, Youth and National Service will work closely with NAMCOL and support its efforts to develop national competency standards for the youth work sector and to identifying alternative pathways for youth worker qualifications. We know that beyond the ‘**professional youth workers**’ we have a great number of persons who also, give much time and effort to serve young people whether in in schools, in youth clubs, on street corners, in faith based institutions, civil society organizations and in government offices setting policies and frameworks. Without these persons the empowerment of young people would not be where it is today.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

In conclusion, allow me to point out that the time has come that we as a Nation should seriously consider investing in the development of youth workers. These are individuals that will play a critical role in building the capacity of our young people to consider risks, make informed decisions and take control of their lives. It is therefore imperative that academia, learners, youth workers and young people work together not only to make an impact but to measure that impact along a road that will make all the difference. I therefore wish call on you to give your best to have youth workers who are trained to work and engage our young people as a key part of our youth development strategies.

At this juncture, I would like to thank the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Consortium for Youth Work for their support to professionalize youth work, not only by investing in training

and education of youth workers, but also by supporting the building of a body of knowledge in the field to support the practitioners.

Let me also and most importantly thank **Dr. Murangi** the Director of NAMCOL and his Management team for exceptional leadership and for being the beacon of hope for many of our young people. I really commend the effort the Namibian College of Open Learning is doing to help many of the youth who failed either grade 10 or 12 over the past many years to get back in to the education mainstream and to accorded and opportunity to qualify for University Entrance.

I therefore, wish that this training programme will successfully establish a sustainable mechanism for delivering a quality Youth Work programme and thus look forward to the valuable contribution the Youth Workers will make to Namibia and Africa as whole now and in future. I once again wish our respective visitors a pleasant stay in the land of the brave and pray for your safe return to your various destinations.

Without further do, I now have the singular honour and privilege to declare the Technical Workshop of Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work, officially opened!

I thank you.