



SPEECH WOMEN IN ENGINEERING CONFERENCE

By

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Minister of Mines and Energy

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WINDHOEK

- **Hon. Doreen Sioka , the Minister of Gender Equality and Child Welfare,**
- **Honourable Ministers Present here**
- **Honourable Deputy Ministers Present**
- **Distinguish Panellists**
- **Women in Engineering**
- **Distinguished Invited quests**
- **Organising Committee Members**
- **Friends from the Media**
- **Ladies and gentlemen**

Good Morning,

First-of-all let me take this opportunity to thank the organising committee for this prestigious event aimed at celebrating all the women engineers in this room and across our beautiful country and beyond. I'm very honoured at the opportunity to be part of this noble conference and to share a few words with you. I'm delivering this speech with the basics rooted in the key principles as echoed by His Excellency the President of the Republic of Namibia, Dr Hage Geingob; namely poverty eradication, women and youth empowerment and no one should feel left out.

To all the women in Engineering, we celebrate you, your achievements and particularly your contribution to the Engineering Pprofessionn.

In the developed world as is the case all across the world, there is an insatiable demand for engineers

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Namibia is a member state of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and by virtue of this very membership Namibia is signatory to a treaty not to discriminate against any person based on, inter alia, gender and sex. The influence of SADC Protocol on Gender and Development gave birth to the introduction of 50/50 representation in Parliament through the National Gender Policy. It is my wish to see this initiative cascading down to other areas as well including engineering. I'm happy to share that the government has made and continues to address the gender inequality by making provision in the Constitution that no Namibian should be discriminated against on the basis of gender, sex or ethnic background. One of the national objectives outlined in the Vision 2030 is Inequality and Social Welfare. That objective is being address in the current National Development Plan (NDP4) under the goals of Employment Creation and Increased Income Equality.

The Affirmative Action policy was also introduced to make sure that all Namibians are treated equally and the empowering of women are some of the programmes in the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare. The Employment Equity Commission was established to ensure that all employers

have adopted and are implementing the affirmative action plan. Employers including the engineering profession are encouraged to implement their affirmative action policies as a tool to foster fair employment practices with regard to matters such as recruitment, selection, appointment, training, promotion, and equitable remuneration for previously disadvantaged, women and youth.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This conference is being hosted at the right time to create awareness and encourage more women to take up engineering as a profession. This conference will highlight the various branches of engineering and what it takes to become an engineer. Aspiring engineers should take note and be inspired by those who have walked that path before and have succeeded.

Ladies and gentlemen

I am happy to report on this platform that Namibian women are serious on taking up careers in engineering. Here are some statistics in the country.

- *At Unam there are currently 71 female and 224 male students registered in the Engineering field*
- *At Polytechnic there are currently 277 female and 850 male students registered in the School of Engineering*
- NamPower has 9 female Qualified Engineers and 27 male Qualified Engineers in Nampower.
- Mining companies are currently employing 41 female engineers across.

- Electricity Control Board has 2 female engineers.

Just to mention a few.

We celebrate this positive achievement but continue to encourage initiatives from all sectors (government and non-governmental sectors) to support the development of female leaders in Engineering and to increase the number of women in engineering in the sectors mentioned above.

Richard Boocock, Vice President of Global Operations at Air Products once said "Women's voices are essential to the problem-solving and innovation that is at the heart of engineering". He suggests that if the content of the work itself is made more societally meaningful, women will enrol in droves as they are drawn to projects that achieve societal good. The desire does not only apply to computer engineering but also to more traditional, equally male-dominated fields like mechanical and chemical engineering".

Lina Nilsson noted that Universities in the United States have programs aimed at reducing global poverty and inequality that have achieved similar results. A good example is the Princeton University where the student chapter of Engineers Without Borders has an executive board that is nearly 70 percent female, reflecting the overall club composition. It shows that the key to increasing the number of female engineers may not just be mentorship programs, but more about reframing the goals of engineering research and

curriculums to be more relevant to societal needs. It is not just about gender equity — it is about doing better engineering for us all."

Women form the majority of the working force in many African countries and also make up over 50% of Africa's population. However, the number of women in science and engineering is still low, that is, below 20%. This is hampered by lack of strong support for science and awareness of local and international funding agencies.

In line of the above-mentioned statements we encourage engineering companies to develop inclusion frameworks that cater for both sexes and assist everybody male and female to thrive in their work environment.

The sector needs intelligent, highly capable people with an interest in building a better world, a requirement that is not gender specific. Therefore women should be challenged to take up that role to make a difference in the world and who is better qualified than a woman.

I am not ignorant of the fact that women's complex and multiple roles may be a challenge, but, women are still encouraged to seek career pathway options that allow them to have both fulfilling professional careers and vibrant personal lives. Experienced engineers should mentor upcoming women engineers who are desirous to enter and succeed in the field of engineering through established forums such as Women in Engineering Namibia. More awareness should be created in schools, communities, at trade fairs and exhibitions. Every woman who has made it has a responsibility

to empower another woman. As the popular saying goes..."Educate a woman and you have educated a nation". I challenge all women present here to live true to that saying.

Ladies and gentlemen

Professional groups like (Engineering Council of Namibia and Engineering Professions Association of Namibia) are encouraged to identify, recognize and reward companies that strive towards National engineering excellence in encouraging diversity as well as recognizing the contribution that engineering makes in the community.

Universities should play their part by staying relevant in their research initiatives to find solutions to pressing everyday engineering problems.

The world needs more engineers, if we are to see more innovations and inventions. Namibia does too, if we are to realize our dream of becoming an industrialized country by year 2030.

There is a wide range of opportunities for engineers in the country; for example the Ministry of Mines and Energy has vacancies to recruit engineers such as electrical, marine and mining engineers; parastatals and private companies to name a few; Municipalities, Nampower, TransNamib, Roads Authority, Ports Authorities, Petroleum Houses, Consulting Engineering and Mining Companies.

Growth -at -home has been the buzz word on everybody's lips. Engineers have a big role to play in making sure that the full benefit of our natural resources is enjoyed here at home by ensuring that the Strategic areas in the NDP4 such as manufacturing leading to value addition is done locally as far as possible.

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, let me call on all Namibians to explore and invest in the country's economy. The Government of The Republic of Namibia has created conducive environments through sound investment frameworks. As regulators, our doors are always open for you when you need assistance in the process of investing in the country. Together, we can make Namibia an industrialized country even in our lifetime.

I thank you!!!