



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

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AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICE TO DIGITAL EQUITY

The Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education

Director of Ceremonies,

Distinguished Delegates,

All Protocol Observed

Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to be here and receive this prestigious Award on behalf of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Namibia and indeed on behalf of the Chairperson of ICTs in Education Steering Committee. I note with satisfaction that since the launch of this Award in 2002, all the winners have been from the Americas, meaning Chile in South America and the United States of America. This year, the Award has gone beyond the Americas to yet another continent (Africa) and in particular Namibia in the southwest corner of Southern Africa. I am therefore humbled and encouraged by this generous gesture.

Namibia as most of you may or may not know is the youngest country on the continent of Africa. We have just celebrated our 17 years of existence as a sovereign nation having finally attained statehood from Apartheid South Africa on 21 March, 1990. For such a young and small nation of about 2 million people, to have made such an impression at such prestigious international forum is indeed cause for celebration. This Award will act as a catalyst and add synergy to our efforts as we seek to bridge the digital divide and create digital equity in our society.

Three years ago in 2004, a challenge was given to the Ministry of Education to find ways and means of ensuring that ICTs become a household name in the Namibian Education System. A Steering Committee was put together to chart the way forward to realize this challenge. In defining what needed to be done, it was realized that any significant ICTs investment in education will require a conducive policy enabling environment. Instead of rushing for the actual deployment of ICTs in schools, the Steering Committee opted for the creation of a sound ICTs policy for education that recognizes the enormous challenges that needed to be overcome. In 2005, a policy was completed and approved by Government as the Policy on ICTs in Education. The next step was to develop an implementation plan that would guide the implementation of ICTs in schools. This plan outlined priority areas that needed to be addressed first in order to have maximum impact on the education system. To ensure that the plan gained the necessary support from all stakeholders, an official launch of the Implementation Plan was held in September 2006. At the launch all stakeholders were requested to sign a Partnership Declaration to ensure that they effectively participate and commit in its implementation

In the preamble to the Partnership Declaration which was signed by 43 public, private and civil Society organizations, the need to synergize and harness the potential of limited resources and expertise in ICTs, was stressed and agreed upon. Government was to be seen as a facilitator and

enabler by creating an environment that will render possible the participation of these multi-stakeholders. The preamble clearly states that ***“WHEREAS the Government of the Republic of Namibia has declared its intention to create a knowledge-based economy and diffuse innovations such as Information and Communication Technologies (hereinafter referred as “ICTs”) as an important tool for meeting the objectives of Vision 2030; AND WHEREAS, to pursue these objectives, the Government has approved an ICT Policy for Education; AND WHEREAS, the Ministry of Education has embarked on a sector-wide reform through the development of the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP); AND WHEREAS various Partners have been involved in ICTs in Education projects that heretofore lacked coordination with other Partners or a national initiative; AND WHEREAS the Ministry of Education has created an ICTs in Education Steering Committee which includes members from all relevant line ministries, educational institutions, civil society and other public and private sector Partners; AND WHEREAS the Ministry of Education, through the ICTs in Education Steering Committee, has developed a comprehensive ICTs in Education Implementation Plan (Tech/Na) to coordinate Partner activities; NOW THEREFORE the parties hereby agree as follows:***

The Ministry of Education shall:

- (1) Coordinate the activities of all Partners to realize the goals and targets established in the ICT Policy for Education and Implementation Plan;
- (2) Lead the mobilization of the necessary resources to effectively execute the activities outlined in the Implementation Plan;
- (3) Work with all stakeholders in transparently allocating available resources to specific activities outlined in the Implementation Plan; and
- (4) Operate with the ICTs in Education Steering Committee as the recognized body for stakeholder consultations and feedback.

I must stress that Namibia has always believed that teacher education is one of the most important sectors in its growth and development as a nation. To ensure that this becomes a reality, teacher education was made a priority. The ICTs in Education Steering Committee, like SITE, recognizes that teacher education programs are change agents and that ICTs can be instruments of change, and as such, both are necessary in helping Namibia transform from a developing to developed nation and reach the goals the country has laid out for itself in Vision 2030.

Director of Ceremonies, Namibia is still overcoming the gross inequities in educational, political, cultural, social and economic sectors left over from pre-independence apartheid, but huge progress has been made in just 17 years. Similarly, progress is being made to ensure availability, access to and effective usage of ICTs for ALL Namibian school children, which means surmounting geographic, economic, infrastructure, and training barriers. The ICT Steering Committee is committed to making this happen, starting with teacher education programs and we are honoured that SITE has recognized our efforts to promote digital equity in and through teacher education.

The Ministry of Education, through the ICT Steering Committee, is now taking a comprehensive top-down approach and has called upon all local ICT-related organizations as well as international support (from the World Bank, UNESCO/GeSCI) to implement an ambitious and far-reaching strategic plan. We believe that the lessons learned will provide invaluable information for teacher education programs in both developing and developed nations.

With recognition like this from international organization like SITE, our resolve to strengthen our effort to ensure that sooner than later, we become a technological powerhouse in Southern Africa is

redoubled. We are aware of the fact that many good things are happening on the continent of Africa, but tend to be overshadowed by conflicts, HIV/AIDS and other natural disasters. We are happy that at least at this forum, we are not raising money to feed the poor in Africa, but rather, acknowledging the good work by professionals on that continent.

As a nation, we will cherish this award and look at it as an inspiration. We will continue to work hard in other areas where greater improvement is still required. So do not discount us in future awards. As we progress, we will ensure that SITE is fully informed of our progress. To those of you who may someday find yourselves in Southern Africa, please do stop by in Namibia and see for yourselves. We may not have much to offer but love and human compassion are trademarks of our people.

I thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alfred Ilukena', written in a cursive style.

Alfred Ilukena
Chairperson, ICTs in Education Steering Committee