

Remarks by H.E. Kevin J. McGuire, U.S. Ambassador
at the Young Scientists' Fair
September 12, 2003

It's a pleasure for me to be with you here tonight to help celebrate the achievements of the learners who participated in the Young Scientists' Fair.

Congratulations to our award winners. I applaud your hard work and creativity; and I encourage you to continue to pursue your interests in science. It's innovators such as yourselves that will help Namibia transform itself from an exporter of raw materials to an exporter of finished products and first class services.

Congratulations too to the other learners who participated in the event. While not everyone can win a prize, be assured that the knowledge and experience you gained through your participation has its own rewards. And who knows, maybe your idea was a good one, but one that just needs a bit more work. Always remember the determination of Thomas Edison. He invented the light bulb but had to endure over 4000 failures before he succeeded in inventing a bulb that was efficient enough to be successful in the market.

As I'm sure the participants will agree, science fairs are a lot of fun. But they're serious business as well --serious business because they're about educating our young people. When I went to school, we were taught that there were three factors of economic production: land, labor and capital. Today, many would add knowledge as a fourth factor of economic production and argue that it is the most important of the four.

Most assuredly, in the 21st century, the countries best able to guarantee the welfare of their peoples will be the countries that have best educated their people and that, together with their people, are able to build knowledge-based economies. Minister Angula, Minister Mutorwa and other leaders of Namibia's education sector have recognized the importance of a well educated work force to Namibia's future and are acting to ensure that Namibia's schools are providing learners with a high quality education.

I'm happy to see that the commercial sector is getting involved as well and hope that other firms will emulate the example that Nampower and

Namdeb have provided with their donation to the science fair. Public-private partnerships in the education sector not only expand the pool of resources, they help ensure that education is relevant to the market place.

I'm pleased too that the U.S. Government has been able to associate itself with the science fair. Let me note that both the U.S. Agency for International Development, USAID, and the U.S. Peace Corps are working closely with the Ministry of Basic Education and the Ministry of Higher Education to strengthen their support for science, math, and other technology related programs in the school system. In particular, I'd highlight USAID's collaboration with the Ministry of Basic Education, the Namibia Institute for Educational Development and SchoolNet to expand the use of computers and the internet as learning tools in the schools. I believe the introduction of information technology to the classroom will make a significant contribution to educating a 21st century workforce. And I bet that, with a computer savvy work force, Namibia will not only be producing Thomas Edisons. We'll see a lot of Bill Gates' as well.

Let me close my remarks with that and encourage all our future scientists to continue the with the sort of exciting sorts of projects that we've seen during this science fair.