WELCOME BACK TO SCHOOL REMARKS

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The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture is happy to welcome you all back to the new academic year. We hope that everyone had a very pleasant holiday season and that you are well rested and ready to tackle the year ahead.

It goes without saying, that as a Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, our mandate, besides promoting art and preserving culture, is to EDUCATE.

The Oxford dictionary defines education as “the act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and generally of preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life”.

Education is thus about more than just maths, science and geography; it is first and foremost about imparting values and building skills for life, instilling self-confidence and applying them in real life. It is thus up to all stakeholders, especially parents and guardians to look at the holistic development of our learners, to ensure that we produce well rounded adults who are curious, inquisitive and autonomous beings and thus become productive members of society.

To our learners, I want to say that intelligence plus character is the true goal of education. I want to encourage you this year to not only work on your studies, but also to work on yourselves, work on your attitude towards life, while taking note that you are the main difference maker in your life. Our Namibian society faces many challenges, but in you lie all the solutions. You are the foundation on
which we are going to build going forward. If you do not ascribe to high standards for yourself and your communities, then we will not be able to prosper. Uphold the code of conduct of your schools, be kind and caring to your fellow classmates, teachers and education staff. Respect your school and your school uniform and be an ambassador for your school. Let your behaviours not bring your school into disrepute. Take care of your school, ensure that your school environment is clean and hygienic. An organized and clean school environment conveys a message of caring and shapes the attitudes and personal development of learners. Be the key information and sustenance of your performing school culture. 

I would like you to be committed to your studies, make every minute, every hour and every day count and go the extra mile to achieve your dreams. Truly set goals for yourself and do not let failures set you back. Let your failures teach you about your opportunities to grow and succeed. Be the agents of change in your own lives and be the change you want to see in others. 

To our teachers…..It takes someone special to be an educator; a person who cares for others, and aims to help students grow to their fullest potential. I congratulate you on the work that you did last year. We know it was not an easy year, but we are grateful to our teachers for their dedication and hard work. The best teachers are capable, dedicated and hardworking, along with having an interest in making a substantial difference in the future of children. Best teachers
listen with intent, foster discipline and confident minds and build understanding on the strength of diversity and tolerance. The beginning of the of the year should be a time where we rededicate ourselves to the profession in guiding a new group of learners, from where they are to where they need to be at the end of the year. Every learner deserves quality education and we want to thank you for putting the needs of the learners before your own.

I want to encourage you to continue dedicating yourself to your work and bringing into the classroom the highest level of work ethics. Set the example for learners of hard work, discipline, preparedness, perseverance and commitment. Create a culture of care in your classroom; corporal punishment does not impart any knowledge to our learner and it is against the law. Practice positive discipline, which instils the values of responsibility and acceptable behaviour at school, but also in the larger community and society. Frederick Douglass said that “it is easier to build a strong child, than to repair broken men”. Building people up takes energy. Building people up takes passion and grit. Building people up takes determination. We believe in your capacity to build our children. Acknowledge and involve all and firmly address school violence and bullying.

To our school principals, and school managers, I direct you to be the strong decisive leadership your school needs, by leading by example, as a key driver of success; encourage participation through teacher leadership embracing teachers’ creativity and innovation. Strengthen and expand the amazing teams that excel
and firmly address disunity. Be reminded- a good leader makes leader of others. A good leader listens and accepts good ideas from others and positively accommodates constructive criticism. That’s a kind of a leader whom I believe will succeed in building a strong performing team.

To our parents, we thank you for supporting the school, in the last year and look forward to your support this year also. We cannot over-emphasise the importance of parental involvement in the education of learners. Parents need to know where their children are at all times and what they are doing. Parents should support their children with their school work and extra-mural activities. A parent who remains her child’s partner in education will be a trusted partner in dealing whatever outcome and crafting of the way forward.

Parents/guardians are urged to take up their moral obligation and social responsibility towards the schools to make the necessary financial contributions within their means. Education is our shared responsibility. With the reformed curriculum reaching higher levels of basic education, we request our parents to be active participants by continuously engaging our Regional Education Officers for more clarity and what is expected of them.

I wish to also at this junction thank the stakeholders in education, the school communities and private entities for the support rendered to us last year and we need your continued assistance. We ask the community and the private sector to remain involved in supporting the schools. Join hands with the schools to ensure
improved school governance and social accountability. The school does not operate in a vacuum, but is rather the reflection of the society around it.

As education is a shared responsibility, help us to implement and supervise compulsory school attendance; see to it that every child who was born in 2013 and who turned six years old by the 31 December 2019, has to be enrolled in Grade 1 and every child who was born in 2014 and who turned 5 years old in 31 December 2019 has to attend a Pre-Primary class.

**To all our education directorates**, with the support of Regional Councils, you have carried out your mandate excellently within the confines of the current fiscal climate. I would like to thank you for being the captains of your ships in turbulent waters. You have steered your ship with confidence, commitment and purpose. I thank you. Through the various divisions and directorates we call upon you to continue to support the schools in the implementation of the curriculum, to ensure that continuous monitoring and evaluation takes place and that proper planning is done to ensure timely execution of all of our duties through our strategic objectives.

All learners who have not met the required performance targets and might need to repeat a grade need to work extra hard and utilise the opportunities given. Remember the full-time Grade 10s of 2018 who improved their grades through part-time and to attain 23 points can apply with their original statements of results at the Regional Directorate, the Regional Examinations Officers to establish if or
not there is a school with space in the current Grade 10 for the NSSCO new curriculum. Otherwise it remains the Ministry’s advice that these learners should rather continue through part-time tuition centres in the old curriculum over two years, doing three subjects per year to obtain their NSSCO qualification.

**Dear education fraternity, learners, parents, community, stakeholders and friends in education,** let us as, as John F. Kennedy suggested “see education as a means of developing our greatest abilities, as there is within each of us a private hope and dream, which if fulfilled, can be translated into greater benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation”. Let us remind ourselves that as a country, we have gone through many trials and tribulations in the past and that no matter the difficulty, we have always found the route ahead. The route of light and love. Let us lean on that wealth of experience and knowledge that as a nation we possess, in our culture, in our languages, and above all else, in our people. Let us continue to work together as an education fraternity to ensure that our children have access to quality and inclusive education.

**I wish you all a wonderful and fruitful 2020.**

**I thank you.**