

MEDIA STATEMENT



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BANK OF NAMIBIA HOSTS 26TH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM FOCUSED ON THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

1. The Bank of Namibia today hosted its 26th Annual Symposium under the theme “Unleashing the Power of the Creative Industries: A Catalyst for Economic Development.” The event brought together policymakers, academics, international experts, creators and cultural practitioners to explore how Namibia can build a thriving, competitive and job-rich creative economy.
2. Delivering the keynote address on behalf of Her Excellency Dr. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, President of the Republic of Namibia, the Minister of Education, Innovation, Youth, Sports, Arts and Culture, Hon. Dr Sanet Steenkamp, underscored the centrality of creativity in the country’s growth agenda. She stated that, “the future will not be shaped solely by the resources beneath our soil, but by the ideas and ingenuity of our people.” She added emphatically, “our young people are bold, digitally fluent, and culturally rooted. It is time for them to move from being consumers of global content to producers of uniquely Namibian stories, products, and ideas.” She further called upon Namibian creatives to collaborate, innovate and build, urging them to actively embrace opportunities and strengthen the collective capacity of the sector.
3. The Minister also reinforced that Namibia’s creative sector cannot grow in isolation from the country’s broader national development vision. She emphasised that the creative industries are intertwined with the nation’s historical journey, reminding the audience that the stories of Namibia’s struggle, leadership and resilience must be preserved, retold and reimagined by a new generation of creators.

4. In his remarks, Governor Dr Johannes !Gawaxab underscored that Symposium must serve as the starting point for a deliberate push toward a national policy framework for the creative industries, ensuring that the insights shared translate into concrete, coherent recommendations. He emphasised the need for better organisation and coordination within the government and across the creative community, advocating for a unified, representative body that can strengthen the sector's collective influence. He further highlighted the urgency of addressing financing constraints, encouraging government, corporates and pension funds to consider establishing a dedicated fund for creatives so that talent is no longer stifled by circumstance, and the sector can finally move from fragmented potential to structured opportunity.
5. Deputy Governor Mr. Ebson Uanguta underscored the economic scale and untapped potential of Namibia's creative sector by outlining key data points from the Bank's analysis. He noted that although the creative economy currently contributes an estimated 1.5 percent to Namibia's GDP, its growth trajectory mirrors global trends where creative sectors in comparable economies contribute between 3 and 7 percent. He highlighted that Namibia's youth-dominated demographic presents a strategic opportunity, with more than 60 percent of the country's creatives under the age of 35, positioning the industry as a natural engine for employment.
6. The Symposium featured three panel discussions, each bringing together a mix of local and international voices shaping arts, culture, technological innovation and creative entrepreneurship. The first panel, The Value of Arts and Culture, featured Ms Angelika Schroeder, Rector of the College of the Arts; Mr Malcolm Kambanzeru, Company Secretary of the National Youth Council; Ms Avril Joffe, UNESCO Chair in Cultural Entrepreneurship and Policy at the University of the Witwatersrand; Ms Helvi Elago-Moshell; and recording and performing artist Mr Venaune Ben Kandukira. The panel examined how the arts, culture, and heritage contribute to strengthening national identity, fostering social cohesion, and providing opportunities for employment and economic participation.
7. The second panel, Technology and the Creative Industry, spotlighted the role of digital infrastructure, tech-driven innovation and media transformation. Speakers included Ms Cornelia Shipindo from the Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia; Ms Ojoma Ochai, Managing Director at Co-creation Hub Africa; Mr Kevan McNamara, Managing Director of Kerry McNamara Architects; and poet and performer Ms Frieda Eтуhole Mukufa.

They examined how digital platforms, AI tools and creative technologies can unlock global markets for Namibian creators.

8. The third panel, Business Models and Finance, brought together industry professionals, including Mr Joel Haikali, Executive Producer at Joe Vision Production Tours; Ms Njoki Muhoho, Executive Producer and Scriptwriter at Zebra Productions Kenya; Mr Joseph Ailonga, Board Chair of NASCAM; Ms Undamuje Uanguta; and Mr Nesdha De Jongh, Head of SME Banking at FNB. The discussion unpacked intellectual property protection, viable funding models, creator remuneration, and the importance of integrating creative enterprises into Namibia's financial system.
9. For the first time, the Annual Symposium included a Creative Industry Exhibition, showcasing the work of 15 Namibian creators across design, craft, fashion, digital art, film and photography. The exhibition provided policymakers and stakeholders with a firsthand view of the sector's depth, diversity, and economic potential.
10. In her closing remarks, Deputy Governor Ms. Leonie Dunn underscored that the discussions throughout the Symposium made clear that Namibia's creative sector stands at a defining moment. She stressed that the industry's potential will only be realised through coordinated, deliberate action across government, finance, academia, industry and the creative community itself. Reflecting the urgency of the moment, she noted the calls that emerged from all three panels, from derisking the creative industries, reflecting on the curriculum needs, closing data gaps, and emphasised that these conversations must now translate into practical, collective next steps that move the industry from fragmented to formal, from potential to productivity, and from inspiration to industry.
11. The Bank recognises the value of convening discussions of this nature, as they deepen understanding of emerging sectors, broaden perspectives across stakeholders, and contribute to a more informed national dialogue on economic development.

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