

Tertiary-level students discuss access to information and gender equality

24 July, Windhoek: A Public Lecture on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5 'Gender Equality' and 16 'Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions' was held on 24 July at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) in Windhoek. The lecture was a continuation of the World Press Freedom Day Celebrations 2018 in Namibia that started on 7 May under the theme "Keeping Power in Check: Media, Justice and the Rule of Law". The public lecture aimed to look at access to information and the importance of applying gender-sensitiveness.

Delivering the welcome remarks on behalf of UN Resident Coordinator a.i. Rachel Odede, the Head of UNESCO Windhoek Office, Dr. Jean-Pierre Ilboudo gave insight into the UN's perspective on peace, justice and strong institutions and how it is linked to gender equality. He underscored that, "The theme also highlights that independent and gender-sensitive coverage can increase citizen engagement by providing the public with veritable information."

During her presentation, NUST Senior Lecturer, Emily Brown gave an overview about the topic within the international as well as the national context. In this regard, she mentioned the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in 2015 where around 80 world leaders committed to end discrimination against women by 2030. She further outlined that Namibia has finally validated its own National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, recognising the imperative role that women play in preventing conflicts in society.

Feminist and Human Rights Communication activist, Linda Baumann presented on the recognition of women and girls in the media as well as how SDG 5 and SDG 16 can be incorporated in the socio-economic development of the country. She outlined the concepts of gender and sex, drew attention to the difficulties of accessing information for women and girls and talked about how the terms equality and equity require gender-sensitiveness.



During his presentation, Gender Specialist Ngamane Karuahie alluded to the Combating of Domestic Violence Act of 2003 and Married Persons Equality Act of Namibia of 1996, as legal commitments promoting gender equality, but questioned the respective enforcement in practice. He stressed the significance of genuinely internalising what gender equality means and putting it into practice, instead of just approaching it theoretically.

After the speakers had shared their personal reflections on the topic, those in attendance engaged in discussions with the speakers specifically on the content presented. Dr. Ilboudo closed the lecture by thanking the students for their attendance and inputs and the speakers for their insight.

The societal relevance of this event is also mainstreamed in the UN's partnership with the Government, the United Nations Partnership Framework (UNPAF) 2014- 2018. The Institutional Environment Pillar spotlights the importance of transparency, strong institutions and human rights and the Poverty Eradication Pillar addresses gender inequality and its adverse impacts on development. Furthermore, it contributes to the implementation of the National Gender Plan of Action, another outcome of UNPAF.