



Republic of Namibia

# MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

STATEMENT

BY DR RICHARD NCHABI KAMWI, MP

DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE ENLARGED MINISTERIAL MANAGEMENT MEETING AND MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT FORUM



## Welcome and Good Wishes

We are at a dawn of a New Year and of a New Decade in the Millennium. It is a great pleasure for me to welcome and extend Compliments of the Season to you all today. I hope that you all had a pleasant and restful festive season and that you have recovered your energies for another full year. Please accept my good wishes for love, peace and good health for you and your families.

## Purpose of the meeting

Today and this week we will again meet with our key stakeholders to share the Ministry's main achievements and challenges for the past year and outline major strategic objectives, priorities and initiatives we have set for ourselves for the year 2010. Furthermore, the Ministry also uses this forum to develop and strengthen its Officers' management skills and foster team spirit. This is why this week's session is known as the Management Development Forum.

I would like to thank all the invited guests for making time to be here with us today. As I do every year, I have extended invitations to Representatives of the United Nations family. And for the first time this year, I decided to extend invitations to the UN Resident Coordinator and to our partners from some Embassies and High Commissions, the civil society and Non Governmental Organizations, the private sector, academia and Mission Hospital leaders, the National Youth Council, SWAPO Party Youth League and NAPWU, because of the important role they are playing in helping strengthen our health sector. You are all most welcome; you have and continue to support the Ministry of Health and Social Services in so many different ways throughout the years and I would like to tell you that your contributions are most appreciated.

## An important year- celebrating 20 years of Independence

In his opening address to Cabinet Members, during the first Cabinet session on 26 January 2010, His Excellency Cde. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, had the following and I quote: "The year 2010 is a significant milestone in the life of our nation, as we will celebrate 20 years of nationhood, democracy, freedom and self-determination" unquote. Indeed we will be celebrating 20 years of building our health sector, correcting the disparities and imbalances of the past, extending services to rural and underprivileged areas, and improving the quality of health care provided to our people. This will be an opportunity to look back and reflect; learn lessons and move forward, by building on past successes, challenges and experiences.

## The measles outbreak

We have reasons to celebrate but also to be concerned. The ongoing measles outbreak is a reality check; a wake up call; but also a tremendous opportunity. The measles outbreak has uncovered many of the systemic issues that we have been battling with for the past 20 years as a young nation that inherited a fragmented and skewed health system. This measles outbreak gives us a bold opportunity to re-think and build better and robust systems that will address the challenges of immunization, nutrition, sanitation, and other health determinants and risk factors of ill health.

I must also indicate that the Namibian outbreak is not happening in isolation. There is a Southern Africa wider outbreak that has hit Angola, Botswana, South Africa, Lesotho and Zimbabwe in various degrees. As we speak, WHO teams are on the ground in these countries, including Namibia, investigating further and providing guidance for a better response. Indeed, you are also aware that the Ministry has embarked on a mass vaccination campaign for the entire population of Opuwo, to curtail the outbreak. We will also be vaccinating in Outapi, Onandjokwe and Rundu.

## Remembering the unsung heroes In Namibia

Allow me to pause for a moment to pay tribute to the armed forces of our health system, all those men and women, nurses and doctors, pharmacists, cleaners, secretaries, clerks, ambulance drivers, environmental health officers and other cadres that have passed away at the service of our nation, promoting or restoring our people's health and preventing diseases. They deserve our respect and their dedication will always be remembered with profound gratitude.

## In the Region

We are meeting at a time when the African Union is mourning the loss of an Ambassador for maternal health. The African National Congress (ANC) and

the Government and the people of South Africa are mourning a liberation heroine. Indeed SADC in particular, is mourning a heroine in public health. Today, we are acclaimed to be one of the few African countries having a State of the Art Cardiac Unit and this we owe it to Dr Mantombazana Tshabalala-Msimang, the former Minister of Health of South Africa who passed away late last year. She was a sister and indeed a friend of the people of Namibia. We remain grateful for her unconditional support at all times. Let us observe a minute of silence in her honor. May her soul rest in eternal peace.

## In the world

We are also meeting at a time when the Government and the people of Haiti are battling with one of the major disasters of modern history. In times of crisis such as this, when an already fragile health system has completely collapsed, doctors and nurses have been killed by the earthquake, hospitals and clinics have disappeared, and hundreds of thousands of people have died or are seriously injured and millions are destitute, and the spread of infectious diseases is inevitable, it is hard to measure the health impact now and in the days and years to come.

To the Government and people of Haiti, in particular to the Minister of Health, we send our most sincere condolences and sympathies. The people of Namibia share in their suffering and disarray. As you all are aware, Ladies and Gentlemen, our Government and Civil Society have joined the international community in providing support to the people of Haiti.

## The President's directives

I would like now to invite you to kindly lend me your ears and pay attentively to three important quotations from the Statement by His Excellency the President on the occasion of the First 2010 Cabinet meeting last January. I extracted these quotes, since they constitute directives to Cabinet Ministers and as such, I am re-directing them to my staff at the Ministry. This is what His Excellency had to tell us and I quote: "Our people in different parts of the country are **demanding, and justifiably so, the delivery of services and public amenities**. We must continue to answer their legitimate calls and their pleas by expanding the availability of potable water, **access to quality health care** and education and by strengthening our responses to the challenges of HIV/AIDS, crime and unemployment" unquote.

The President further said: "... **it cannot be business as usual**. Rather, we must all bring our creativity to bear in order to address and indeed solve the problems that confront our nation. We must be bold and resolute enough to adopt and expand only those measures and approaches that are effective in yielding the desired results".

A third important directive from His Excellency reads as follows: "I would like to, once again, emphasize the imperative of **hard work, dedication and proper planning at all levels**. This implies that as political principals of different public institutions, the Ministers and their deputies must at all times keep their hands on the wheel to ensure timely implementation of our policies and the relevant Cabinet Decisions by the Permanent Secretaries and their staff" unquote.

## Call to action – President's directives and the Strategic Plan

The President's directives are very clear. The year 2010, will be an implementation year, a year of action, a year which is results oriented and forward looking. This is a year when the Ministry will start implementing its Strategic Plan 2009-2013. The Strategic Plan has been officially approved by Cabinet at its session of 26<sup>th</sup> October, 2009, along with the Health and Social Services Systems Review report.

As a reminder to all of us, our Vision for the next 5 years starting now is for this Ministry to be "**The Leading Public Provider of Quality Health and Social Welfare Services in Africa**".

I am pleased to note that the Strategic Plan has been cascaded to all Regional and National Directorates as well as to District and Intermediate Hospitals. All the above-mentioned have successfully developed their management plans and Balance Score Cards for the financial year 2010/2011 that are linked to the Ministry's Strategic Plan. This, Programme Director, Ladies and Gentlemen is a big achievement and a first step of this Ministry towards the implementation of its Strategic Agenda.

I am also informed that, for monitoring purposes, a standard reporting format and key standard indicators/measures have been developed and are to be adapted during this meeting. This calls for commitment, dedication, strong leadership and a change in doing things from each team leader in his/her Directorate/Region/Hospital/Division/Unit or Office. Each Team Leader will be directly accountable for his/her Directorate/Region/Division's performance, which is to be measured against achieved objectives per quarter to be indicated by tangible measures especially customers' satisfaction rating.

It is therefore my sincere call to all of us to perform our duties with dedication if this Ministry is to be one of the performing institutions by serving our nation to its satisfaction and by living to our vision and mission. I am equally happy to note that Performance Management System is one of the Agenda Items to be deliberated on during this week's Management Development Forum. I therefore wish to thank the Office of the Prime Minister, which will be the facilitator of this session in this regard.

I expect that during the next Enlarged Ministerial Management Committee Meeting of February 2011, this Ministry's performance report should be presented based on key measures/indicators and objectives achieved. Equally, each Director or Heads of the Institutions should be directly accountable for performance and non performance of his/her institution.

My message focuses on the implementation of our Strategic Plan due to the fact that it is the one that should direct us in order for the Ministry to contribute to the achievement of the Government's Strategic Agenda, the SWAPO Party 2009 Manifesto and the Country's National Development Plans such as NDP3 and Vision 2030 and the internationally agreed health MDGs.

## Achievements

Without wanting to repeat the Permanent Secretary's presentation on our 2009's Achievements and Challenges, I wish to say that in 2009 we made significant progress in several areas of which I can mention just a few:

1. The operationalisation of the Cardiac Unit, where 3 specialists have been recruited, while Namibian doctors, nurses and radiologists have been sent to Groote Schuur hospital in South Africa for attachment as part of training.
2. Progress made in collaboration with the University of Namibia in the Establishment of the Medical School, which enrolled its first intake this month.
3. Increased number of patients on ART bringing the total number to 64, 637 as of March 2009, as well as the number of sites providing ART that increased from 34 hospitals to 62 health facilities inclusive of Health Centres and Clinics.
4. Successful organization of the HIV/AIDS Implementer's meeting. As a result, Namibia continues to be recognized all over the world for the great strides of its HIV/AIDS programme. To illustrate this recognition, the country has been invited to the 17<sup>th</sup> Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections, in San Francisco, California which I will be attending next week. I will be a discussant in a panel including Ambassador Groosby, the PEPFAR Global Coordinator.
5. Endorsement of the Tobacco Bill by the National Assembly. The

Bill is ready to be reviewed by the National Council before it is passed into law, hopefully before the end of the first quarter of this year.

6. Piloting of medical male circumcision at Windhoek Central Hospital and Onandjokwe Hospital as a new intervention in the prevention of HIV/AIDS.

7. The successful launch of the "Campaign for Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality - CARMMA" in Namibia, an AU led campaign supported by the UN and other partners.

## Thanking and commending the Ministry's staff

Given this background, I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all those who have worked hard and contributed to the achievements of the Ministry of Health and Social Services during 2009. Please give yourselves a round of well deserved applause. Well done and must add, I am very proud of you all! I am very proud of my staff. Let's keep it up and improve our work for the betterment of the health of our people.

## Challenges

As I highlight the achievements, I am also acknowledging challenges we experienced during 2009 such as the outbreaks of Influenza A/H1N1, the first pandemic of this century, Cholera, Measles and Meningococcal Meningitis in some regions and the floods which affected service delivery in the northern areas of our country. The disease outbreaks taught us that our surveillance, data analysis and reporting systems are not working. We are not collecting, recording, analyzing and sharing information at a fast enough pace to be able to timely detect and respond to disease outbreaks and this needs to be addressed swiftly and respond promptly.

Maternal and child health continue to be important challenges that we are battling with and are areas where we need to invest more time, efforts and resources and devise better and focused interventions, if the Millennium Development Goals 4 & 5 are to be achieved.

HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and malaria continue to be a threat to better health and pose an incredible burden on our health systems. I commend the Director for Special Programmes for the significant efforts put on the HIV/AIDS programme, the results are indeed tangible. Whilst commending the efforts of the Director for Special Programmes, I remain concerned that reports on malaria and tuberculosis are not reaching the decision making senior management in good time. I am expected to report to Cabinet of the Republic, to SADC and WHO and yet I did not receive neither quality nor timely reports. I am even more concerned that the Malaria Indicator Survey Report is still not available, several months after the survey has been completed.

Director, please this is not about you, but if there are issues with the management by the directly responsible person, then I would like to call upon the Permanent Secretary to address them immediately. It cannot continue to be business as usual. Management of critical programmes should be entrusted to capable, reliable and competent staff.

In one word, the achievement of the health related MDGs that is 4, 5 & 6, still constitute a great challenge to Namibia.

As a Ministry, we are in the process of crafting our new National Health Policy Framework for the next ten years, with the support of WHO and other partners. Ways and means of addressing these challenges and the priorities for the next ten years will be delineated and I count on the support of all of you to make your contributions to the development of the National Health Policy Framework.

## Achieving health MDGs : MDGs 4, 5 & 6

We are now only 5 years away from 2015, the end-date for achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to which Namibia along with other nations of the world have set as targets.

Within our health sector, we have probably the single greatest contribution to make towards achieving the MDGs in Namibia. **Health is at the centre of all MDGs and Namibia's socio-economic development towards Vision 2030**. Progress to date in achieving health-related MDGs has been fragmented and yielded mixed results.

The foundation for better health outcomes and achievement of all the health-related MDGs will remain the strengthening of health systems and tackling social determinants of health such as poverty, food security, social exclusion and discrimination, housing, early childhood conditions, water and sanitation, etc. As you can see, some of these issues do not fall under the Ministry of Health and Social Service's mandate.

I want to challenge all of us to think outside the box and explore talents and opportunities which exist outside our health sector boundaries, tap into the non technical resources that can help us make progress with our programmes. I suggest that we involve young people in helping us send positive messages around. I want to give the example of "The DOGG", a young promising artist who is touching young people like him as he moves around the country. Why don't we use him to help us communicate better with the young generation and spread the message about HIV/AIDS counseling and testing for example? The DOGG and others like him are powerful role models and local champions that we should work with more closely.

If we really want to achieve the MDGs, we need to use all available resources, build and strengthen capacity, increase the health work force including taking advantage of existing MoUs with sister countries such as Kenya, and ensure appropriate task-shifting, reduce the imbalance in the distribution of health workers between urban and rural areas, public and private sector, extend and support outreach services, reinforce supportive supervision, and improve health services integration. Our work, planning and decisions at all levels of the health sector must be based on evidence, analysis and strategic information. Only when these success factors are positively combined, we will be able to make significant strides towards 2015.

I want to elaborate more on the issue of task shifting. Despite the positive feedback we received on the potential for the youth to serve in our institutions and complement our task shifting strategies, because they are disciplined and hardworking, the Ministry has not moved into engaging them, for reasons that are only known to us. I have been approached once again by the Youth leadership (both the NYC Secretary General and the Secretary for SWAPO Party Youth League) and I want the top management at the Ministry to take action this time around, as we have not been making any progress on this matter. And yet, we are all concerned with the critical shortage of health professionals in the public sector, particularly nurses and those who are available are overwhelmed with non professional tasks that can easily be performed by these youth.

Finally, I want to make it a point that achieving the health related MDGs – MDGs 4, 5 & 6 – is the top priority agenda for the Ministry of Health and Social Services over the next five years.

## The regional and global health agenda

As much as I focus on the national agenda for action in the health sector and in the course of action over the next year and over the next five years, I am mindful of the health developments in the region and around the world and I strongly believe that we also need to take stock of such developments for that they are shaping the health agenda regionally and globally and with no doubt, will have an impact on Namibia's health development.

I would like to mention just three important developments that I have been following with great attention.

## SADC Healthy lifestyle Day

In two weeks time, the SADC Health Ministers will be launching the SADC