



**Republic of Namibia**

**Speech**

**By**

**Dr Richard Nchabi Kamwi, MP  
Minister of Health and Social Services**

**At the**

**Official Opening of the Thirtieth Medical Association of  
Namibia Congress**

**Windhoek, 14 August 2008**

**D**irector of Ceremonies

**C**EO of Medical Association of Namibia - Dr Maritz

**P**resident of Medical Association of Namibia – Dr Fortsch

**P**rof Peter Zilla

**D**istinguished Facilities (UK)

**C**ongress Participants

**M**embers of the Media

**L**adies and Gentlemen

**I** am very pleased to once again be accorded the honour to officially open the Annual Congress of the Medical Association of Namibia. Indeed, this Congress has become a highly valued gathering in Namibia, especially this one as it coincides with the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of MAN. I therefore wish to congratulate the Medical Association of Namibia on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this Annual Congress. This Congress creates a unique opportunity for medical and other health professionals to share and learn about new developments in the medical and health care sector; as well as providing an excellent platform sharpening their skills and competencies in critical areas; and to network with colleagues.

**I** am pleased that many health professionals including those serving on the Congress Scientific Board, the Organising Committee and the MAN Executive saw it fit to organise this important event on an annual basis. I wish to thank the many sponsors and supporters of the Congress for their important contribution. No doubt, this is and remains a very excellent investment in the health of all Namibians.

**I** consider this Congress theme, bridging disciplines and to bring doctors and health care professionals as being appropriate given the health related challenges we are faced with.

## **D**irector of Ceremonies

**A**t independence Namibia adopted the primary health care approach as a cornerstone for health care delivery services.

**I**ndeed Namibia joined the WHO member states in marking the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Alma Ata Declaration in Ouagadougou, Burkino Faso in April this year. At that occasion, we reviewed the achievements of primary health care on the African continent over the past 3 decades. Member states recommitted themselves to Primary Health Care approach as one

of the major strategy in achieving the Millenium Development Goals. The meeting jointly adopted the Ouagadougou Declaration on Primary Health Care and Health Systems in Africa.

## Director of Ceremonies

I am pleased to report that the Declaration, amongst others, includes the following:

- the need to increase funding for the public health sector to at least 15 % of total government expenditure;
- improving access to health care especially for the poor and most vulnerable by reviewing and revising user fee policies and introducing exemptions and waivers, e.g. for pensioners, orphans and vulnerable children, people with disabilities and the very poor;
- strengthening human resources for health by way of increasing staff numbers, improving training and continuous education, enhancing remuneration and incentives and strengthening motivation and recognition;

- emphasizing community involvement and empowerment through the establishment and strengthening of governance mechanisms at the district and local levels;
- strengthening hospital services in order to enhance their important support function to primary health care and furthering hospital autonomy through improved hospital governance structures;
- further improving quality of health care through increased emphasis on professional ethics and human rights; and
- strengthening partnerships and public – private cooperation in health at all levels.

**I**t is against this background that I wish to appeal to all medical practitioners particularly those in the private sector, be they citizens or on work permits courtesy of the Government of Namibia to volunteer their time and skills in order to compliment Government efforts at state owned health facilities. This should be seen as part of their contribution to the wellbeing and welfare of the less privileged. This practise is not going to be the first of its kind. Indeed, it is a common practice in other countries and does strengthen the national health system.

## Director of Ceremonies

The ministry is currently in the process of completing a comprehensive health systems review which was undertaken during the first half of this year. The review has produced a number of important recommendations that we will take forward into a new strategic plan for the health sector in general and the ministry in particular.

I therefore want to encourage the Medical Association of Namibia, and indeed all other health professional associations to come forward and support this important exercise, which we will conclude during the coming months.

## Director of Ceremonies

As I said earlier, the focus of this year's Congress on Emergencies in Medicines is very appropriate and timely given the increasing medical emergencies and natural disasters with resultant negative implications for public health. We are experiencing Global climate change contributing to weather changes that are much less predictable and may at any time lead to serious disasters, such as the floods Namibia experienced in the northern regions earlier this year.

**A**s a result of this, the health sector faces many challenges, including disease outbreaks such as Cholera and other diarrhoeal diseases. Similarly, we are also witnessing a considerable increase of trauma cases due to road traffic accidents, domestic violence and occupational related cases.

**T**o effectively address the above stated challenges, calls for a united team from both the public and private sectors, hence forth my call to the private sector to join hands with the public sector in addressing these challenges.

**D**irector of Ceremonies

**L**ooking at the agenda of this Congress, I believe you are well positioned to come up with relevant recommendations to address the outlined challenges. I look forward to your deliberations which I believe will further assist us find solutions to Namibian health priorities.

**I** wish you a most successful Congress. I now have the honour to declare the 30<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Medical Association of Namibia officially opened.

**I** thank you