



Republic of Namibia

Statement

By

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

During the Commissioning of the Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory

Windhoek Central Hospital
19 October 2010

Programme Director – Dr Norbert Forster, DPS – MoHSS

Hon. Deputy Prime Minister

Hon. Ministers

Hon. Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services

Hon. Leaders of Political Parties

Acting Director of Tertiary Health Care & Clinical Support Services –
Ms. Pauline Nghipandulwa

Senior Medical Superintendent – Dr Sara Shalongo

The Medical Team of the Cardiac Unit

The Management of Windhoek Central Hospital

The Special Advisor – Dr Viscaya Amutenya

Distinguished invited Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and gentlemen

First and foremost, I wish to warmly welcome you all to the commissioning of the Catheterization Laboratory of the Cardiac Unit for Windhoek Central Hospital. I wish to particularly welcome the Hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Hon. Ministers, the Secretary-General of the SWAPO Party, and the Hon. Leaders of Political Parties who came to join us and to witness this historical event. Thank you very much for the time you made amidst your busy schedule.

As you will recall, the Cardiac Unit was officially inaugurated by H.E. President Hifikepunye Pohamba and H.E. President Thabo Mbeki on 5 August 2008 to provide comprehensive care and treatment for rheumatic heart disease. This is the first Cardiac Unit in the history of our country and indeed the third on the African continent which is up and functioning after that of South Africa, Egypt and Sudan.

The Cardiac Unit consists of two wings, five intensive care unit beds, 12 inpatient beds, monitors and a Catheterization Laboratory. All these units are equipped with state-of-the-art equipment.

As you know, Namibia records more than 3 000 cardiac cases a year, some of them needing surgical correction to improve the quality of the lives of the patients. Previously, Namibian heart patients would have to be flown to South Africa and Kenya for treatment, an exercise that was not only expensive to both the patient and the Government in terms of resources, but also had emotional drain effect on those who had to travel miles away from home.

It is, therefore, profoundly momentous and highly joyous that today we are not only commissioning the Catheterization Laboratory of the Cardiac Unit, but we will also witness the first open heart surgery by the Team of the Cardiac Unit.

The operation will be carried out by Dr. Henning du Toit Cardiologist Surgeon. Dr. Chris Hugo-Hamman, Paediatric Cardiologist who will perform the catheter procedures on the diseased valves. Meanwhile, the adult Cardiologist, Dr. Andreas Wilberg will deal with the problem of heart disease that causes heart attack.

I am pleased to announce that since the Cardiac Unit was first open to the general public on the 23rd June 2008, eight (8) heart surgeries have been successfully performed on patients with rheumatic diseases. In addition, about 200 patients with heart and lung diseases were treated. The operations were performed by a joint team of health professionals from South Africa and the Namibian team.

I wish to take this opportunity to express our profound gratitude to the Government of South Africa for the technical support in this endeavour. We are also very grateful to the Government of Kenya who

extended immense support during the early stages of the establishment of the Unit.

What is the way forward?

I am pleased to inform you that today one open heart surgery will be performed, while another one will be carried out tomorrow. Furthermore, about 160 heart patients are expected to be treated annually with effect from 2011. The plan is to move from easier to more complicated cases once the staff complement of the Cardiac Unit will have been expanded.

I am grateful to announce that this Cardiac Unit will not only treat Namibian patients, but will also treat patients from the rest of SADC member states and beyond in the future.

As we pride ourselves of this achievement, we are also mindful of the fact that Cardiac care is expensive and requires adequate financial resources and political commitment. I am confident that, as Government, we will strive to ensure sustainable service delivery of this important Unit through the allocation of adequate financial resources and required personnel.

With these few remarks, I now have the distinct honour to declare the Catheterization Laboratory of the Cardiac Unit officially commissioned.

I thank you.