



**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT TO CABINET**

**ON**

**THE MOTION ON HIV/AIDS BY HON ASSER G. MBAI**

**BY**

**DR RICHARD NCHABI KAMWI, MP**

**HON. MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES**

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**WINDHOEK**

Honorable Speaker,  
Honorable Members of the National Assembly

HIV/AIDS is the most formidable challenge faced by Namibia since Independence. HIV/AIDS is a global pandemic with a serious local impact in our lives as Namibians. HIV/AIDS has killed thousands of Namibians, men and women, young and old. Many more are living with the disease.

However, Honorable Speaker, Namibians should be proud of the achievements made so far by the SWAPO led Government in tackling the epidemic. I would like to take time to mention just few of them:

- The HIV prevalence among young women aged 15 to 24 years, which is used as a proxy to estimate the level of recent infections, has dropped considerably from 15.2 percent in 2004 and 14.2 percent in 2006 to 10.6 percent in 2008;
- Overall, the estimated national prevalence has dropped from a high 22 percent in 2002 to 17.8 percent in 2008;
- We have achieved nearly universal coverage with Antiretrovirals: as of 31 March 2009, of 79,710 of people in need of ARVs in the public sector (72,173 adults and 7,537 children), 64,637 people were receiving treatment (57,015 adults and 7,622 children) in the public sector, resulting in a coverage rate of 79 percent of adults and 100 percent of children in need of treatment. If the figures of the private sector and of the last months of 2009 are added, we will be above 80 percent coverage;
- In terms Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV (PMTCT), we have reached 70 percent coverage by 2008, with 238 out of 256 facilities with Antenatal care offering PMTCT services.

Honorable Members, before I continue listing the achievements, let me pause for a moment and make a comment on the arguments of the Motion about monitoring and evaluation: if our monitoring and evaluation systems were not strong and reliable, we would not know how many people are on treatment, we would not know how many are in need of treatment, we would not know that the prevalence of new infections among 15 to 24 year olds has decreased from 15.2 to 10.6 percent.

Cde Speaker, this country has achieved 70 percent coverage with prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV/AIDS (PMTCT). How would we know that, if our monitoring and evaluation systems had no pre-defined indicators?

With these figures, you can see that this Government is able to quantify its achievements in the area of HIV/AIDS, because we have put structures and mechanisms in place to collect, analyse and present specific data, by age group and by region. I can make a more detailed presentation with graphs and maps, if the house so wishes, my Ministry is able to show you where and when things are happening.

Honourable Speaker, my Ministry has also recorded other important achievements in the area of HIV/AIDS:

- Just last year, Namibia hosted the largest ever HIV/AIDS Implementer's meeting, which brought to Namibia around 2,000 people, among researchers, public health experts, epidemiologists, activists, people living with HIV/AIDS, programme managers, journalists, etc. The event was covered and hailed all over the world, by print, air and electronic media. To date, Namibia continues to receive congratulations from the international community, for organizing the best ever Implementer's meeting;
- As a result of this success, I have just returned from California where I represented this country at the 17<sup>th</sup> Conference on

Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections. I was a panelist in a round table, along with Dr Eric Goosby, Ambassador at Large and Global AIDS Coordinator at the US Department of State and the UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director. You may wish to know, Honorable Mbai that Namibia was the only country from Sub Saharan Africa invited to the event and to be in a panel. All this, is a result of the international recognition for the good work we are doing on HIV/AIDS. It is unfortunate that this is not recognized at home by some of our fellow compatriots, who seem not to be paying attention to what is happening.

- Another result of our success is the recent approval by the Global Fund Board of our HIV/AIDS Rolling Continuation Chanel proposal, for over a hundred million dollars for a period of six years, to combat HIV/AIDS. If this is not success and progress, what would be?

Having said that, Honorable Speaker, Hon Members, I would like to point out that my Ministry is fully aware of the challenges lying ahead. I am fully aware that we are still far from conquering the epidemic in Namibia. I am fully aware that unfortunately many more Namibians will still get infected and die, before we can halt the course of this scourge. Indeed, I am very much conscious that we are facing many challenges related to the disease itself, the lack of curative medicines and vaccines, but also related to individual and societal factors that compound the problem.

It is because of that My Ministry has not only conducted a research to identify the drivers of the epidemic in Namibia, but has also developed the fourth generation of the National HIV/AIDS Strategic Framework, to guide our future actions in the years to come. It is because of that, that we are putting a strong emphasis on prevention, multiple, combined and positive prevention. The National Strategic Framework will also address the institutional shortfalls and streamline the current relationships and

structures, in order to make them adequate to face today and tomorrow's challenges.

Honorable Speaker,  
Honorable Members,

For the information of Hon. Asser Mbai in terms of targets and commitment made by Head of State and Government during UNGAS, 2001 and that of AU and indeed that of SADC, Namibia had already exceeded the targets. You may also wish to know that in terms of the MDG on HIV/AIDS, Namibia is on course.

Hon. Mbai, the Parliamentary Committee is not an Implementation Agent. Your statement did not dispute the fact that the efforts of Government programmes in addressing HIV/AIDS are on course, indeed that this is a fact acknowledged by the International Community. Given this fact, I object that this motion be referred to a Committee.

However, for us to conquer AIDS, we need to stand united, appreciate our progress and complement each other's efforts. This is a battle that we have to win together; it does not help to spend time with distraction, maneuvering and alike. Let us focus on the bigger picture, so that we can see far and wide and reach our targets as a nation.

I thank you for your attention.