



Republic of Namibia

STATEMENT

By

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

NAMIBIA MEDICAL SOCIETY CONGRESS

WINDHOEK, 11TH November 2010

Dr. Bernard Haufiku – The Chairman of Namibia Medical Society

Board Members Namibia Medical Society

Dear Delegates

Members of the Media

Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen

First of all, I wish to thank Dr. Bernard Haufiku, Chairperson of Namibia Medical Society who extended to me an invitation to officially open your congress.

However, I regret that whilst I accepted this kind invitation I regret that during the course of time Namibia became the Chair for SADC. As a result, the Minister for Health & Social Services is Chairperson for SADC Ministers of Health. There is a SADC Ministers of Health meeting in Lubumbashe, DRC; thus, I have to leave for this meeting at the time of the congress.

I still recall that about 10 months ago I had a rare privilege to commission Namibia Medical Society. Since then, I had been following the events of this new medical organization as events unfold, for example the Congress that has just brought us together in order for us to look into the disease profiles, the epidemiology, the disease outbreaks and to chart the way forward on how to tackle these challenges.

Clearly, my observation is that the Namibia Medical Society had been growing progressively. Indeed, you had been consulting with the Ministry of Health & Social Services. For this, I am grateful and wish to use this opportunity to congratulate you on the developments made to this end and to wish you a bright future.

Programme director,

The healthcare landscape in Namibia is changing as we speak therefore healthcare professionals should anticipate some challenges and be prepared to address them. In spite of these challenges we face there have also been significant strides made in the healthcare sector.

For example, the University of Namibia Medical School was officially opened in February 2010. The medical school was necessary to address the long term critical shortage of doctors throughout Namibia and to enhance the quality of healthcare service delivery in Namibia.

Furthermore, it will also enable much needed research in disease profiles, epidemiology and treatment modalities to improve the state of modern clinical medicine. In this regard, it is anticipated that

in 5 years from now, the Namibian population will be able to benefit from the fruits of this investment.

The Cardiac Unit at Windhoek Central Hospital provides high level care to many of our paediatric and adult population with cardiac diseases. This was an absolute necessity considering the prevalence of congenital heart disease in our paediatric population. Clearly, a challenge existed for our patients to be treated in Nairobi, Kenya and following such sensitive operation these patients were expected to fly back to Namibia.

We are now pleased to announce that what was a dream has now become a reality. Indeed, we are now able to successfully perform cardiac surgery at home. We should be proud of these achievements as they bring us closer to vision 2030.

While we look back at our achievements with pride and honour, we are still jolted by the increasing

burden of diseases such as HIV/AIDS, TB, malaria and now malnutrition. Malnutrition is becoming a growing concern as more and more of the pediatric population is now affected by it.

Programme director,

In the midst of these challenges we need to galvanize our efforts and thoughts to provide solutions to these problems that we are faced with. There must be stronger collaboration between the state and private sectors in addressing these challenges.

In addition, the maternal mortality rate which is now estimated to be 180/100 000 is an issue of great concern for all of us. I am thus pleased that this topic will feature on the congress agenda.

One contributing factor is a challenge related to a shortage of skilled personnel in most of our health

facilities especially in the rural area. As a result, there is an ongoing training of trainers for both midwives and some medical doctors here in Windhoek to address these challenges. We believe that once they complete they will go back into their respective regions to go and continue training their colleagues.

However, it will also require a concerted effort from all health professionals to effectively tackle and subsequently see a decline in our Mortality rate. In light of the many challenges we face, we cannot work in isolation but must take ownership of the problems that the nation is facing with effect from today.

The role of governing medical bodies or societies is to remain relevant to the issues facing the medical profession. For this reason, it is encouraging to note that the society is willing to discuss unpopular but necessary topics such as abortion, medical malpractice and maternal mortality.

By discussing the day to day issues that are lingering in the minds of healthcare professionals the society plays a crucial role in improving healthcare in society. I trust that Namibia Medical Society will continue to keep to their principles of promoting affordable and quality healthcare services to all Namibians.

Programme director, dear delegates

I know have the honour to declare Namibia Medical Society Congress officially opened.

I thank you.