

Ministerial Statement by the  
Hon Minister of Health and Social Services,  
Dr. Richard Nchabi Kamwi,  
on the occasion of the  
commencement of Cardiac Services at Windhoek Central Hospital

National Assembly  
01 July 2008

Hon. Mr Speaker  
Hon. Members

It gives me great pleasure to report to this august house the most recent progress made with the establishment of cardio-thoracic services at the Windhoek Central Hospital.

Honourable members will recall that this important issue has previously been discussed in this house during the budget debate related to Vote 13 of my ministry. I am sure that honourable members would also have followed the reporting on this very historical event for the health services of Namibia in the various media.

I hereby want to confirm that during the week of 23 to 29 June 2008 nine (9) patients received open heart surgery in the Windhoek Central Hospital. As I speak, all of them are making very good progress and are cared for in the new cardiac intensive care unit in the Windhoek Central Hospital.

All the patients received cardiac valve replacements. They now have a normal life expectancy. Before, they were hardly able to move properly due to their heart failure – despite their young age.

All of them had heart valve disease mostly due to rheumatic fever, which they contracted during childhood or early adulthood.

I want to also confirm that all the operations were conducted by a team of cardio-thoracic surgeons, nurses and technicians from Groote Schuur Hospital in Cape Town, South Africa. They worked in close collaboration with our own staff in the relevant units in Windhoek Central Hospital.

As honourable members may know, it is at Groote Schuur Hospital that the world's first heart transplant was performed in 1967. We are therefore honoured and privileged in Namibia to be able to be cooperating with such a leading hospital on this important project.

Also during last week, my ministry was graced by the visit of my South African counterpart, Dr Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, who expressed her fullest support for this project. We were both also accompanied by senior officials and had a number of meetings to discuss the way forward. At the end of her visit, we signed a protocol that sets out the main points of our mutual agreement and clarifies the next steps in our joint undertaking.

In this regard, I am pleased to report that a visit by the relevant doctors and technical staff from my ministry to Cape Town to finalise a detailed implementation plan and a twinning agreement between Windhoek Central Hospital and Groote Schuur Hospital will take place later this week.

At this stage we are planning to have a team from Groote Schuur Hospital visit Windhoek every 4 to 6 weeks to perform further open heart surgery, while my ministry identifies relevant Namibian staff and sends them for training in the various relevant areas.

Our aim is that over the medium term our own Namibian staff and doctors will increasingly take over from the Groote Schuur

hospital team. I intend to inform this august house from time to time on further progress made.

At this stage, let me take this opportunity to thank my cabinet colleagues and honourable members for their support in this exciting endeavour. I also want to commend my ministry staff and especially the staff of the Windhoek Central Hospital for having made this new venture possible. At this stage I am very confident that many more Namibians will be able to benefit from cardiac services over the next months and years to come.

I thank you,