

**SPEECH BY
THE HON. DR. RICHARD NCHABI KAMWI, MP
MINISTER OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES OF THE
REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

**The Official Opening of the 13th Biennial Congress of South
African Society of Nuclear Medicine
21-25 August 2008
Windhoek, Namibia**

Madam President
Distinguished guests
Members of the press
Ladies and gentlemen

Allow me first of all, to thank you for this invitation/ privilege to officiate at this “The 13th Biennial Congress of the South African Society of Nuclear Medicine” which, as I have learned, for the first time ever in history is being held outside the South African borders.

On behalf of the Ministry of Health and Social Services and myself, allow me to extend a very warm welcome to you all to our beautiful Republic of Namibia”.

I take this opportunity to thank Madam Eiselen, the president of the South African Society of Nuclear Medicine and all the society’s members and the international guests for opting to host

this highly scientific event with such an outstanding tradition and distinguished representation from Africa and the world in our capital city, Windhoek.

Director of Ceremonies

Nuclear medicine is a medical specialty that in a safe and painless way uses radioisotopes to diagnose and treat a wide range of diseases. Nuclear medicine procedures help doctors to obtain crucial clinical information that could not be obtained by any other means for purposes of helping the patient.

Here in Namibia, nuclear medicine services were first established more than 20 year ago. The facility provided continuous health services throughout the years with the support of the ministry to all Namibians, both from the public as well as the private sectors. More than two thousand procedures are performed annually.

The majority of patients are cancer patients. It is very important to us as a ministry and a nation to be able to provide such highly specialized health services to our patients. Not many African countries have such services, and thus we welcome your efforts to promote this important diagnostic and therapeutic health tool

through Africa. At the same time, we are fully aware that non-communicable diseases, including cancers, are increasing in the African continent. Nuclear Medicine is therefore increasingly relevant and important for public health in general.

I would therefore like to assure you all that my ministry recognizes and welcomes all efforts toward improvement and advancement of nuclear medicine in the Republic of Namibia.

At the same time we recognize that Namibia is a developing country with a high burden of communicable diseases.

Namibia is amongst the countries hardest hit by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. AIDS has become the number one killer disease in Namibia. By the end of 2005, over 200 thousand adults and children were living with HIV. The AIDS death toll that year was 17 thousand. There were more than 85 thousand AIDS orphans recorded. However, we have made considerable progress in combating the disease.

By mid 2008 over 50 thousand Namibians were receiving antiretroviral treatment. This is equivalent to around 70 % of those in need of treatment. Over 88 thousand pregnant women received

HIV counseling and testing and over 16 thousand HIV positive pregnant women were put on antiretroviral prophylaxis. Yet, we are reminded from time to time that our primary health care efforts require much further strengthening as well.

In 2006, for the first time in over 10years, Namibia recorded an outbreak of POLIO, imported from a neighboring country. My ministry together with the international community launched a successful immunization campaign against POLIO which saw all adults and children being immunized all over the country. This successfully brought the outbreak under control.

Ladies and gentlemen

You can see that my ministry is committed to fight diseases and promote health in our society. I therefore welcome and support you in your quest here to share your knowledge in the important field of medicine and promote health throughout Africa.

Namibia fully supports the peaceful application of nuclear technology. Nuclear technologies contribute significantly to good health which is crucial for any community or nation to develop.

Finally, let me welcome your Congress to Namibia also in the light of increasing regional collaboration within SADC and indeed also in the light of our joint work with the Republic of South Africa on strengthening South-to-South cooperation and good neighborliness within the region.

In conclusion, I hereby declare the 13th Biennial Congress of the South African Society of Nuclear Medicine officially open. I wish you very fruitful deliberations and a most pleasant stay in Namibia

I thank you