Republic of Namibia

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

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MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

DURING THE

INAUGURATION OF THE NHTC'S RENOVATED PHARMACICT ASSISTANTS TRAINING UNIT

Windhoek
4th August 2008

Director of Ceremonies – Ms. Celine Usiku

Hon. Deputy Minister of MoHSS – Ms. Petrina Haingura

Deputy Permanent Secretary of MoHSS – Dr. N. Forster

Undersecretary: of MoHSS – Mr. P.K. Ndaitwa

Ambassador of the USA to Namibia - H.E. Ms. Denise Mathieu

Management Science for Health/Strengthening Pharmaceutical Systems – Dr. David Mabirizi

Reverend – Dr. Elton Black

Acting Deputy Director: Pharmaceutical services – Ms. J. Lates

Directors and Deputy Directors from MoHSS

Senior officials of the MoHSS

Strengthening Pharmaceutical Systems Namibia Office staff

Members of the Print and Electronic Media

Ladies and gentlemen

I feel honoured and privileged to address you on this very special occasion: the official opening of the renovated National Health Training Centre (NHTC) Pharmacist Assistant Training Unit.

Human resource development is central to effective and efficient delivery of health services in Namibia and is an absolute priority to

the Ministry of Health and Social Services. For any Government, health is a fundamental concern, which warrants the highest priority to be given to maintaining and promoting it. This inauguration of the renovated NHTC Pharmacist Assistant Training Unit is a clear demonstration of the commitment of this Ministry and our Development Partners, specifically Management Sciences for Health, to the development of human resources and maintaining and promoting health.

Director of Ceremonies

Ladies and Gentlemen

One of the main challenges confronting the health sector remains a shortage of health and social services personnel, including Pharmaceutical personnel. The recent health and social services systems review indicated that this shortage is a result of various factors which include limited human resource supply within a highly competitive labour market, inadequate production of health and allied health workers. This is primarily as a result of inadequate capacity of our local health related academic institutions and lack of retention of staff in the public sector.

Similarly, HIV/AIDS also contributed to the burden on human resources not only to the Ministry but the whole country is affected. There is therefore a need to increase on the training of health personnel in order to meet with the demand.

Director of Ceremonies

Ladies and gentlemen

Access to health services, competent staff, and appropriate medicines are necessary components of any health care system. Of these (three) 3 components, medicines are of special importance because of various reasons including the following: They save lives; they Improve health; they promote trust and participation in our health services; and they constitute a very significant proportion of the health care budget.

In addition, the quality and cost effectiveness of health care provision is highly dependent on the availability, rational prescription and appropriate use of medicines. Appropriate use of medicines, however can only be affected if there are enough competent human resources to provide information to our patients to ensure that they correctly use their medications. It is for these

reasons that my Ministry requires that all cadres of health personnel are well trained and capable of properly managing the scarce resources available for health care provision including pharmaceuticals.

Director of Ceremonies

Ladies and Gentlemen

The World Health Organisation encourages member states that where the availability of high professional staff is a challenge, a practical strategy would be to train a mid-level cadre of staff who are fully supervised by a higher level cadre. My Ministry has long seen the benefit of such an approach with our Enrolled Nurses produced from this the National Health Training Centre and its Network across the country. Indeed, the Pharmacist Assistant Training Programme we are implementing at the NHTC is based on the same relevant concept. I am therefore very encouraged to note that we are taking a further step towards fully institutionalizing this important programme today.

Director of ceremonies

Ladies and gentlemen

The provision of training facilities and training of staff also goes hand in hand with standard setting. The standardized training enhances training, and thus a high level of overall competence. The Ministry is therefore in the process of paving the way for recognition of their prior learning when graduates of this course after completing their training and working for a number of years want to enroll at other higher training institutions to further their career.

This NHTC was instituted in 1994 as a measure to address the human resources for health challenges experienced after independence. The NTHC core courses have now been running for more than 10 years and many very positive results are evident. Since inception of the Pharmacist Assistant course an average of 10 students were taken in per year. However, these numbers are not adequate to address the imbalance.

Unfortunately, the limiting factors in producing more Pharmacist Assistants have been shortage of tutors, limited space and inadequate facilities for the training of this cadre. I am thus pleased to inform you that since the beginning of the 2008 academic year and with the support of our Development Partner, Management Sciences for Health with funding from USAID, the

average intake of ten (10) students has been increased to twenty (20) students. Two (2) additional tutors had since been recruited. The Pharmacist Assistant Training Curriculum was completely reviewed and brought in line with standards acceptable to the Pharmacy Council and the Namibia Qualification Authority. This will ensure that quality staff is being produced from our Training Network on a yearly basis.

Director of ceremonies

I am very proud to announce that with the opening of this renovated NHTC Pharmacist Assistant Training Unit, the Ministry is now in a position to enroll more than 25 students per year, starting from January 2009. This is a positive step towards sustainable human capacity development in the health sector and another milestone in the Ministry's efforts to improve health services for the Namibian people.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is for this reason that we remain grateful to our Development Partners for an emmense support to our capacity building notably Pharmacist Assistant. The Directorate: Policy Planning and HRD, Division: National Health Training Centre, wishes to thank the Management Sciences for

Health SPS programme for the job well done. The U.S. Government through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) who made this project possible.

I furthermore wish to thank ITECH for its continued support through the provision of training personnel to all our Ministry's training centres. This is indeed an important complementary contribution

Director of ceremonies
Ladies and gentlemen

I now have the honour an pleasure to declare this NHTC Pharmacist Assistants Training Unit officially open.

I thank you