



Republic of Namibia

Keynote Address

By

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

**At the Fundraising Dinner & Celebration of
International Day for Older Persons**

**2 October 2008
Kavango Regional Auditorium**

Programme Director

Hon. Rosalia Nghidinwa, Minister of Home Affairs and
Immigration

Chief of Party, URC Namibia Dr. Frantz Simon

Hon. John Thighuru, Governor of Kavango Region

Hon. Regional Councillors

His worship the Mayor of Rundu Town – Cde. Josef Mukoya

His worship the Mayor of Nkurenkuru Town –
Cde. Heikki Ausiku

National Council Member for Older Persons – Rev. Lihongo

Heads of various Ministries and Various NGOs

Hon. Traditional Leaders

Distinguished Church Leaders

Distinguished Business Communities

Dear Senior Citizens

Distinguished Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed an honour for me to join you on this very important historical event Celebrating the International Day for Older Persons this evening. 1st October had been declared by the United Nations General Assembly as the International Day for Older Persons. This

evening we belatedly join the global celebration of the International Day for Older Persons under the theme “The Rights of Older Persons”.

Older persons are an integral part of our society. They continue to play an important role of guiding and directing nationhood and development. It is thus of paramount importance that we commit ourselves to the protection and promotion of their well being, their rights as senior citizens, particularly those who are in need of care. It is heartening that some people in our society are increasingly showing disrespect and neglect of the elders. There is a sure sign of deteriorating cultural values and norms. May we make use of this day to recommit ourselves to respect and care for all the elders in our communities.

Programme Director

Ladies and Gentlemen, as part of our commitments towards the rights of the Older Person, it is befitting and proper that we celebrate the contributions and achievements of the senior citizens

with this Gala dinner made possible by several people including the Ministry of Health and Social Services.

The Gala dinner over and above celebrating The Rights of Older Persons also aims at raising funds to establish a Traditional Show House which will promote understanding and appreciation of traditional and cultural ways of living. The Show House will be promoted as a tourist attraction to the region, thereby raising much needed funds for various projects for the Elderly.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the theme for this year, “The Rights of Older Persons”, encompasses everything that the Namibian senior citizens deserve. I am personally grateful that the SWAPO Party led government ratified the UN Principles for Older Persons of 1991 in which the rights of older people are enshrined. Permit me to highlight just few important rights related to this Convention.

Older persons have a right to health care, adult education, the right to work and live at home as long as possible in a supportive and safe environment. They have a

right to access social and legal services. Accordingly, older persons should be informed about their rights so that they know how to assert themselves.

There is need for senior citizens of the country to freely participate in social activities and opportunities to share their knowledge and skills with their communities.

They deserve to be cared for physically, mentally and emotionally. They also need self-fulfilment in order to realize their full potential.

Indeed, older persons deserve to be loved, respected and honoured, treated fairly, valued in their own right and live in a dignified and secure environment free from exploitation, physical or mental abuse, and to be able to exercise their freedoms.

In our ongoing efforts to create an enabling environment for all our senior citizens, Government is mindful of the plight of the elderly, and is looking at ways in which they can enjoy these rights. In this regard, I would like to re-iterate a statement I made last year when I addressed the SWAPO Party Elders Council that the Ministry of Health and Social Services will no longer charge senior citizens, orphans and vulnerable children the user fees when in need of medical attention at health facilities. To this end, my officials are hard at work consulting their colleagues at the Ministry of Finance to amend the law wherein Senior Citizens were paying for services at health centres and hospitals. Whilst this is ongoing, officials at the Ministry of Health and Social Services at receptions are under directives not to send away Senior Citizens, orphans and vulnerable children for not paying a user fee.

Programme Director, dear Senior Citizens,

My Ministry is committed to the provision of quality, accessible and affordable health and social services to our older persons and we will go the extra mile to ensure that their rights are protected and promoted. The Directorate: Developmental Social Welfare Services have facilitated the establishment of Regional Committees for Older People in order to promote and protect the interests of older persons in the entire country.

Clearly, the government cannot address the challenges posed by our ageing population alone. For this reason, I wish to call upon able bodied men and women to get back to basics of our African culture where it is the duty of the children to care for their ailing parents. Indeed, for communities at large to give assistance to some older persons who unfortunately may not be blessed with our offspring. There is need to join Government efforts in providing essential services for the welfare of Older Persons.

In conclusion, Programme Director, dear Senior Citizens, my message to all our senior citizens is that Government remains

committed to caring for your well being and provide a conducive environment in which your dignity is preserved. Thank you for your contribution towards building this country, educating the younger generations and sharing your skills and expertise with us. I wish you good health, peace prosperity and a blessed and well deserved International Day of Older Persons.

I thank you.