



**OPENING SPEECH OF THE HIV PREVENTION IN CARE AND  
TREATMENT SETTINGS (PITCS) STUDY MEETING**

**BY:**

**HONOURABLE DR. RICHARD N. KAMWI, MINISTER OF THE  
MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES**

**28 JANUARY – 01 FEBRUARY 2008**

SAFARI COURT HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTRE

WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA

Director of Ceremony

Dr. Jeff Hanson, CDC Director and Staff

US Embassy Staff

Colleagues in the Ministry of Health and Social Services

Invited Guests

Meeting Facilitators

Distinguished Delegates

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I join the Director of Ceremonies in welcoming you to this important meeting, the first implementers' coordination meeting on HIV Prevention in Care and Treatment Settings. I extend a special welcome to the facilitators of this meeting from the CDC headquarters in Atlanta, USA, as well as delegates from Kenya and Tanzania. Welcome to Namibia, Land of the Brave. Karibu, Namibia!

As we may all recall, Sub-Saharan Africa is the Region with the highest HIV prevalence rate in the world and this includes Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Tanzania, and Namibia

amongst others. As a host country, Namibia is dealing with the impact of HIV/AIDS, addressing the needs of those infected as well as those affected by the epidemic.

By the end of last year over 200,000 people were living with HIV in Namibia. Through the Ministry of Health and Social Services, our Government is implementing targeted programmes to prevent the further spread of HIV/AIDS, and to treat and care for those infected and affected.

In this regard we have successfully rolled out nationwide PMTCT and VCT programmes. Furthermore, ARV treatment is presently being given to 70 percent of those of our citizens living with HIV/AIDS. We are now at a stage where we are rolling out these programmes from health centres to clinics to facilitate the easier and more affordable access for those in need.

However, as we can all appreciate, these programmes are extremely expensive. As Governments alone, we may not afford to cover all the necessary costs. For this reason, various efforts have been made by national Governments in the region with support from local and international partners to collaboratively arrest the continued spread of HIV.

One of the largest partners in Sub-Saharan Africa in this respect is the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). It is therefore my distinct honour, on behalf of the Government of Namibia in particular and the Governments of the Sub-Saharan Africa Region in general, to convey our heartfelt gratitude to the U.S. Government and its people for all the financial, technical and logistical support rendered to us over the years.

As regards why we are meeting here over the next five days, prevention interventions for HIV-positive persons are an essential part of a comprehensive HIV prevention strategy. To-date, prevention efforts have largely focused almost exclusively on HIV-negative individuals. It has been realised, however, that there is need to extend the prevention strategies to include HIV - positive people. To this end, PEPFAR is supporting Sub-Saharan Africa countries to develop and evaluate an HIV prevention intervention package for health care settings.

I am delighted to note that Namibia is one of the implementing countries for this noble strategy, together with Kenya and Tanzania, representatives from which are also present at this meeting. We feel greatly honoured to have been accorded the opportunity to host the initial implementers' coordination meeting. May your deliberations be fruitful and result in a

speedy rollout of the Prevention in Care and Treatment Settings strategy not only in the three (3) countries represented here, but let the lessons learned from the initial implementation phase in Namibia, Kenya and Tanzania inform the implementation of this strategy in all other countries hit by the HIV pandemic worldwide.

Director of Ceremonies,

It is my understanding that for some of the delegates to this important meeting, this may be your first time to visit Namibia. I wish to tell you that Namibia is indeed a land of true contrasts with diverse cultures and a rich history. From the south Atlantic Ocean and Namib desert in the west, Namib desert being the oldest desert in the world, to savannahs, grasslands, and mountains in the central regions, arid and historic canyons in the south, Namibia is truly one of nature's masterpieces. Therefore, I invite you to find time after your busy schedule to enjoy our Namibian hospitality, delicious food and breathtaking sceneries.

Once again, I wish you a fruitful week and a safe stay in Windhoek, and indeed look forward to hearing of and witnessing the progress made during your deliberations in the fight against HIV and AIDS. Director of Ceremonies, ladies and gentlemen, I now have the honour to declare The HIV Prevention In Care and Treatment Settings Study Meeting officially open.

I thank you for your kind attention.