



**Republic of Namibia**

**Statement**

**By**

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

**At the Observance of the International Day of Older  
Persons**

**Theme: “The Rights of Older Persons”**

**1 October 2008**

**P**rogramme Director – Dr. Ithindi Shipanga

**P**resident of the National Council for Older Persons in Namibia –  
Dr. Rev. Ng. Z. Nakamhela

**U**N Resident Co-ordinator for Namibia, Secretary General-  
Mr. Simon Nhongo

**H**is Worship the Mayor of the City of Windhoek- Mathew Shikongo

**D**irector for Developmental Social Welfare Services – Ms. Batseba  
Katjuongua

**D**istinguished Invited Guests

**D**ear Senior Citizens

**M**embers of Media

**L**adies and gentlemen

**I**t is indeed an honour for me to join you once again at this special event celebrating the International Day of Older Persons with the rest of the world. Indeed this is a wonderful occasion for the Namibian Government to demonstrate her commitment to the well-being and the importance of older persons in Namibia. Older persons symbolize not only our ties with the past, but they are also the bridge builders to the future generations well being.

**I**t is for this reason, that I thank the Directorate for Developmental Social Welfare Services, the City of Windhoek, the United Nations (UN), the World Health Organization (WHO), and other stakeholders for the initiative in organizing this event. Your efforts in creating a conducive environment for older persons in the City of Windhoek to come together, interact and share a common pleasure is highly appreciated.

**O**lder persons are an integral part of our society as we need their expertise and wisdom. 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.

**P**rogramme Director

**G**iven this background, the theme of this year, “The Rights of Older Persons”, encompasses everything that Namibian senior citizens deserve. I am personally grateful that our government ratified the UN Principles for Older Persons of 1991 in which the rights of older people are beautifully enshrined. Allow me to highlight some important issues related to this piece of legislation. Accordingly, older persons should be educated regarding their rights to play an active role to advocate for their rights.

**O**lder persons have to be independent which includes access to basic needs, health care, educational programmes, work and the right to live at home as long as possible in a supportive and safe environment.

**T**here is need for senior citizens of the country to freely participate in social activities and opportunities to share their knowledge and skills with their community.

**T**hey deserve to be cared for their optimum level of physical, mental and emotional well-being and includes access to social and legal services.

**T**here is also a need for their self-fulfillment in order to realize their potential and access to educational, cultural, spiritual and recreational resources.

**I**ndeed, older persons deserve to be dignified, to be treated fairly, to be valued in their own right, to live in dignified secure environment and free from exploitation, physical and mental abuse, and to be able to exercise personal autonomy.

**I**n the spirit of this theme, 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 do away with charging the senior citizens, orphans and vulnerable children the user fees at health facilities. To this end my officials are hard at work while consulting their colleagues at the Ministry of Finance to amend the law where 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.

**P**rogramme Director, dear Senior Citizens,

**T**he traditions and values that used to ensure the protection of older people in Namibia are under constant pressure because of social and economic changes. However, Namibia is part of the global community and we should learn from our global partners and create a conducive environment that will allow older persons the opportunity to contribute to the prosperity of our nation.

**M**y 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.

**C**learly, the government cannot address the challenges posed by our ageing population alone and thus we call for the assistance of the communities where our older persons reside to help government in realizing these goals.

**I**n 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 together we love you all. Thank you for your contribution towards building this country, educating the younger generations and sharing your skills and expertise with us.

**I** thank you.