



Republic of Namibia

Speech

By

Dr. Richard Nchabi Kamwi, MP

Minister of Health and Social Services

At the official opening of the Namibian Dental Association

Congress

Windhoek Country Club Resort, 18 September 2008

Director of Ceremonies

President of the Namibia Dental Association (NDA), Dr. Chris De
Chavonnes Vrugt.

Deputy President of the NDA –Dr. Kagiso Moloji

Members of the executive committee of the NDA

Prof V Phillips, and esteemed conference speakers

Invited guests from our fellow African neighbours

Esteemed members of the NDA here present

Dear participants, congress facilitators and organisers

Members of the media, representative of dental cooperates

Ladies and gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure and it is indeed a great honour to welcome you at this important 2008 Namibia Dental Association Congress.

The NDA Congress has indeed become a key event on the calendar of health care activities in Namibia. I have no doubt, after taking a look at the congress programme, that your deliberations over the next three days will definitely add value to the practice of oral health and dental services in Namibia.

It is difficult to talk of health and exclude oral and dental health. In the Primary Health Care approach, oral and dental health plays an integral part of general health and well-being. Hence, the provision of efficient and high quality dental services to our people is no doubt a very important requirement if we want a healthy and happy nation. As can be deduced from your objectives you have the responsibility to:

- Restore and enhance smiles
- Prevent dental diseases and provide education to dental patients
- Set high standards of safe dental care

- Provide guidance training to and expertise to dentists and dental auxiliaries.

Meeting the above objectives obviously has challenges, like:

- Meeting the high cost of dental services
- The challenges placed on the provision of oral health by the national HIV/AIDS epidemic
- Keeping up to date with rapid developments in dentistry and oral Health
- Training and retraining of dentists and dental auxiliaries in keeping abreast with the above developments
- Provision of efficient and quality dental and oral healthcare services to the remotest of rural populations.

Thus, continued professional education is a prerequisite to maintain professional standards as dentistry is a rapid developing profession. In turn, this will ensure the availability of well qualified and informed dental health personnel to render services of high standard to patients.

Director of ceremony

It is the wish and objectives of my Ministry, as the custodians of oral health in Namibia, to create an enabling environment in terms of policy and legal framework, within which all oral health and dental practitioners in Namibia, through your efforts can reach and exceed the above objectives. However, in the public sector, we are experiencing a considerable shortage of dental personnel, equipment and dental material as a consequence very often our service is restricted to dental extractions. This picture is changing as Atraumatic Restorative Treatment (ART) is becoming available. Our long term vision is to improve dental services to render all the specialities of dentistry in Namibia's public sector to the vast majority of Namibians who are unable to access the private sector. At the same time, there is need for us to further strengthen oral and dental public health through improved prevention and oral health promotion.

Director of ceremony

I am reminiscent of the old days, when as a young boy in the village we would receive dental check-ups from a white truck equipped with all kinds of instruments and dental staff with white coats and a mask which is a dream to most people living in our rural areas population.

This picture motivated many of you sitting here, to become dentists or dental auxiliaries in your own right.

Oral and dental health mobile outreach services remain an important intervention. Yet we find that the vast majority of our dental practitioners work in urban areas today. At the same time there is need to ensure that oral health is an integral part of our education system and that projects such as the “Smiling School Programme” are implemented in all 13 regions of Namibia.

Director of ceremony

Public health is not only the responsibility of the public sector. It has become time that both the public and private sectors hold hands and assist each other to meet the numerous challenges facing the provision of dental and oral health services and to create synergies to that effect. Therefore, I want to call upon all private practitioners to render your assistance to our public institutions.

I wish you much success during your deliberations. Having said that it is now my most singular honour to declare the 2008 Annual Namibia Dental Association Conference officially open.

I thank you.