



Republic of Namibia

STATEMENT

BY

**DR. RICHARD NCHABI KAMWI, MP
MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES**

ON THE OFFICIAL VISIT TO

**CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA
12TH – 16TH FEBRUARY 2008**

Programme Director – Professor Ronald Green-Thompson,
Special Advisor to the Minister, South Africa
Dr. Mantobazano Tshabalala-Msimang, Hon. Minister of Health
for South Africa & my Big Sister
Hon. MEC Pierre Uys, Western Cape
The CEO, Groot – Dr. Karienn
The CEO, Tygeberg – Dr. Carter
DDG, Western Province – Dr. Engelbrecht
Senior Officials
Comrades and Friends

Before I can get to business, I am mindful of the fact that the African National Congress has had its congress; perhaps one of the most hotly-contested, in terms of leadership. I followed the activities with keen interest, and I want to say how grateful I was to learn that my Big Sister emerged among the victorious. For one to emerge victorious in such a battle is proof of confidence that the nation has in your abilities and especially with your track-record of criss-crossing the country, tireless at work. I wish on behalf of the Namibian delegation, and indeed myself, to heartily congratulate you.

It is indeed a great pleasure to be in Cape Town, South Africa, blessed with its glorious landscape and rich history. On behalf of my entire delegation, I wish to thank you first and foremost for your red-carpet reception, tailor-made programme, and indeed, for your prompt response to a pressing need for Namibia.

It is true that we have come on this visit with a determined mission to consult and plan on a way forward that, following a cooperative partnership between our two sister-countries, would see the eventual and sustainable set up of a Cardiac Unit at the Windhoek Central hospital. This mission therefore also aims, by virtue of the SADC Health Protocol, to further strengthen the already close and long-standing relationship between Namibia and South Africa.

In terms of the exploration of a partnership to assist Namibia in establishing our own Cardiac Unit, the delegation is here in South Africa to learn from 'the best'. Following a historic exploration with Chris Barnard Museum, indeed South Africa is a pioneer in this field. We appreciated the standard, the professionalism, and academic nature of the institutions here, and are keen to model the Namibian cardiac unit along these lines.

The Windhoek Central Hospital is the overall national referral hospital for Namibia. It receives patient referrals from the intermediate referral and district hospitals in the country. In the past, cardiac patients were referred to South African hospitals, especially Tygerberg hospital. But, as we can all appreciate, referral has become increasingly costly both in terms of patient recovery as well as financially. While interim solutions have been sought, including transporting patients to Kenya and South Africa, the need for Namibia to have its own Cardiac Unit has become increasingly clear.

Consequently, in 2002 Cabinet took a decision that a Cardiac Centre be established in Windhoek Central Hospital. Since then, I am happy to note that the infrastructure has been developed and all required technology has been procured and is currently being installed. Therefore, while the physical infrastructure is now in place, it is with determination that I confirm that we do not have the human resources to run this unit; neither cardiologist, cardiothoracic surgeon, nor trained technicians and specialised nurses.

Given the historic ties between Windhoek Central Hospital and South African hospitals, we believe it is time to revive this

interaction and further strengthen our cooperation, which of course is already strongly established in the fields of undergraduate training and post graduate training. Also medical internship is an area of strong linkage between our two countries. This is the basis of our request and the origin of our exploratory visit and consultations this week; to seek your assistance. We have already had fruitful visits, tours and consultations at Groote Schuur and Tygerberg hospitals, and I am keen to visit the mobile paediatric cardiac unit in Langa, and look forward to learning from this unit. Suffice it to say, we are hopeful and grateful to note the enthusiasm with which our request has been met by our counterparts here. Particular thanks, for your encouragement and willingness goes to the CEOs of the two hospitals. Dr. Kariem and Dr. Carter, and your teams; and in particular to Professor Mayosi. In addition, special thanks, and our sincerest gratitude goes to Professor Thompson, Special Advisor to the Honourable Minister.

Director of Ceremonies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

There always remains room for exchange and considerable contribution to knowledge and experience in terms of primary health care and community based health care. This year marks the 30th Anniversary of the Alma Ata Declaration. We strongly

believe that our overall health systems require further strengthening related to the primary health care and community based health care. Thus, there is considerable need, while during our current visit to focus on a highly specialised curative service, to also consider preventive, promotive and rehabilitative measures related to cardiac conditions. Hence the importance of visiting the paediatric cardiac unit, and encouraging future exchanges.

Director of Ceremonies,

Through our visit here in South Africa we are in the process of implementing the stipulations of the SADC Health Protocol, which directly encourages cooperation in health within our region. I therefore want to make use of this opportunity to also invite you, Cde. Minister, to visit Namibia. We will be best most delighted to host you and show you some of our best practice projects in addition to whichever aspect of our health system and country you may wish to get to know better.

Director of Ceremonies,

Together, Namibia and South Africa spearheaded malaria prevention in SADC by advocating for the adoption of indoor

residual spraying with DDT. The positive effect is an accomplishment close to my heart, an indeed that of my Big Sister. Notwithstanding having come close to SADC regional malaria elimination, there are factors which stand a chance of backtracking the progress we have made. For example, Namibia is currently blessed with copious rain. While this is good news general, there is clearly the spectre of increasing malaria cases as a result of the presence of much standing water. I want to assure you that we are however fully prepared for the possibility of any increase in malaria cases. Again, this is an area we see the SADC Health Protocol fully in action. Strong cross border cooperative with Angola as well as Zambia and Botswana is again helping us all to fight this challenge. And I want to express our gratitude to my Big Sister, Hon. Comrade Dr. Mantobazana Tshabalala-Msimang for your strong leadership within SADC on this important programme.

Let me also take this opportunity to renew Namibia's strong commitment to our joint work in a number of important international fora. Namibia will continue to actively participate in SADC as well as the AU and the African Regional Office of WHO. Namibia's term on the WHO Executive Board is coming to an end this year, but I can assure you that we will continue to strongly promote the African position during the World Health

Assembly to ensure that issues which affect our health care systems very directly, such as the migration of health professionals, the cost of pharmaceuticals, the orientation of our health systems towards primary health care, are taken care of and find reflection in the international discourse to promote the interest and support the needs of the people of the African continent. You can count on Namibia.

Let me express my sincere gratitude to Hon. Dr. Tshabalala-Msimang and her able and efficient team from the Department of Health, and Hon. Francois Uys and team from the Western Cape Province, for a very excellent, organised and highly interesting tour of some of the world-class facilities you have to offer. We have indeed been very impressed also with the warmth and openness of all officials we have met and have been able to establish some excellent exchanges that, I am certain, will be further strengthened during the months and years to come.

At this point in time, I look forward to signing the agreed minutes related to our visit and to start very shortly with the first visit of a team of technical experts to Windhoek Central Hospital in order to determine our detailed needs and to start focussing on a clearly targeted work plan.

Finally, Director of Ceremonies,

Hon. Minister,

Let me thank you on behalf of my delegation for your excellent hosting. I certainly want to reiterate my fullest commitment to make our cooperation a great success.

I thank you.