



Keynote Address by

Hon. Dr. Richard Nchabi Kamwi

Minister of Health and Social Services

**WHO 60th Anniversary Press Conference**

**April 16, 2008**

**UN House, 38 Stein St.**

**Windhoek**

Master of Ceremonies,  
WHO Representative in Namibia, Dr Magda Robalo,  
UN Resident Coordinator Mr Simon Nhongo,  
Representatives of UN Agencies present here,  
Members of the Media,  
UN Staff,  
Ladies and Gentlemen;

Thank you Dr. Robalo for your introduction.

I am pleased to be addressing you all today as a partner of WHO Namibia. The Government of Namibia, and especially the Ministry of Health and Social Services, has enjoyed a close and rewarding relationship with WHO over the years. Together, we have watched the face of health in this country go through drastic changes and together we have celebrated many successes. May we celebrate many more in the years to come.

At this launch of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations of the World Health Organization, the Government of Namibia would like to officially congratulate WHO in reaching this significant milestone. Internationally, WHO has initiated great ventures in public health including the eradication of smallpox in 1979 and the polio eradication initiative established in 1988. Thanks to the later, Namibia should very soon find itself attaining polio free status in polio eradication – a great achievement indeed.

In a national context, we can say that the WHO has been with us since the beginning. Thanks in part to their assistance which began in 1990, a newly independent Namibia saw almost immediate gains in public health, and the government managed to progress more in a few short years than it had for decades in this area.

Indeed, as an ordinary citizen, I am personally indebted to WHO for the Fellowship awarded to me to obtain my Masters in Applied Parasitology and Medical Entomology, and further, to attain my PhD in Malariology. Many more Namibians were, and continue to be, assisted by WHO through this process of human resource development. This has, and continues, to prepare us as Namibians to take public health in this country to greater heights.

Today, we continue to work side by side to combat Namibia's biggest health challenges including HIV/AIDS, TB and the inequality of healthcare access and services.

Namibia is proud of being a WHO Member State. In this capacity, we participate and contribute to the deliberations of its Governing bodies, the Executive Board and the World Health Assembly, as well as the African Regional Committee.

Namibia contributes to set the policies for the Organization, to approve the Organization's budget, and every five years, to appoint the Director General.

It is because of this shared and valued history between the Government of Namibia and WHO that I am honoured to announce these 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary activities. It is our belief that these activities will not only serve to commemorate the support provided by WHO to Namibians, but will also serve to pass along valuable health information aimed at empowering the people of Namibia to lead healthy and productive lives.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

One of the main activities commemorating the WHO 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year will be a large-scale media awareness campaign. As part of this campaign, the WHO will host a variety of radio quizzes that address major health issues in Namibia and provide information for listeners on relevant topics. Appearances by UN delegates and government officials on television and radio talk shows, including NBC's Talk of the Nation and this morning interview at Good Morning Namibia, serve to introduce new and emerging health issues into the mainstream media and spark lively debates.

In May, WHO plans to partner with the Ministry of Health and Social Services and the Katutura Community Arts Centre to host a photography exhibition which will showcase the different faces of health in Namibia. Housed inside the centre's art school, the exhibition will provide a pictorial insight into how health issues affect different regions, populations and sectors. It will show the human impacts that result from the health issues we often hear about in the media, but can be hard to visualize.

Another major activity this year will be a Secondary School musical competition where schools will be asked to compose and perform songs which promote key health messages. The aim of this activity is to get to youth to think analytically about health issues while broadcasting important messages in a positive way. The finale of this competition will involve a large public performance with prizes for the winners.

Near the end of the year, WHO also plans on hosting an interactive workshop on maternal health. The workshop will serve to spark debate in the health sector, provide increased awareness on the issue of maternal health and will hopefully serve to influence policy and programming in that area.

As you can see, WHO's planned activities are aimed at providing knowledge and information to a variety of age groups, audiences and sectors. As the Government of Namibia, we congratulate and support them in their efforts this year to transmit key messages to the Namibian public and engage policy makers in relevant debate. We put our trust in WHO, as we have since Independence, to assist us in making Namibia a healthier nation with a bright future.

On this note, it is my honour and privilege to declare the commemorations of WHO's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary launched in Namibia.

I thank you for your attention.