



Remarks by

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On the occasion of

the Launch of
the Ministerial Strategic Plan and
Inaugural Health Assembly 2017/18-
2021/22

16 July 2018
Ministry of Health and Social Services

Thank you Mrs. Petronella Masabane, Director of Ceremonies and Acting Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health and Social Services;

- Honorable Dr Bernhard Haufiku, the Minister of Health and Social Services;
- Mrs. Bertha Katjivena, the Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health and Social Services;
- Mr. Moses Nghipandulwa, Executive Director of the Namibian Federation of the Visually Impaired;
- Representatives of bilateral and multilateral Agencies and International Organizations;
- My fellow UN Country Team Members and UN colleagues;
- Senior staff from the Ministry of Health and Social Services and other line Ministries;
- Members of the media;
- All protocol observed;

I would to thank the Ministry of Health and Social Services for inviting the UN Family to witness the launch of its Strategic Plan and Inaugural Health Assembly 2017/18-2021/22. Today's launch marks the beginning of a process we have advocated for along with other partners in health – a coordinated response and support towards the health sector. It also marks a significant milestone in ensuring that all Namibians have access to quality and affordable health care.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the past twenty-eight years, the Namibian Government has doubled efforts to reduce inequalities in health and ensure the provision of quality services for improved health outcomes, with countless successes¹:

¹ Source: World Health Organization

- The number of AIDS-related deaths decreased by more than 50% between 2000 and 2016 - by 53% in the adult population and by 90% amongst children².
- Namibia is in a malaria pre-elimination phase, having achieved a remarkable decline in morbidity and mortality between 2002 and 2016, with cases dropping from 249.7 to 10.3 per 1,000 people and deaths from 1,030 to 94.
- The proportion of women who deliver in health facilities remains high at 87%, and 88% of deliveries are attended by a skilled birth attendant.

Namibia has also shown robust response capacity around disease outbreak control. During the recent battle against Hepatitis E, the Ministry of Health and Social Services effectively coordinated a multi-sectoral response which ensured timely and effective intervention to reduce the number of cases and deaths.

Although Namibia boasts many successes, challenges persist in the health sector. The adverse effects of a disproportionate share of communicable diseases as well as the increasing burden of non-communicable diseases and conditions³ are eroding much of the country's progress. At the same time, a large proportion of the Namibian population is still experiencing unmet health needs, frequently of a long term recurrent nature, despite the major improvements made to date.

Namibia is also experiencing stark health inequities, including in access to quality services. 82% of the population, mostly informal workers, the unemployed, and other vulnerable populations is covered by 64% of total

² The reduction in deaths amongst children is to the successful prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) programme.

³ such as cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases

health expenditure. A smaller proportion of the population, 18%, enjoys 36% of the health expenditure, through the public servant medical aid scheme.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As health is a challenging, complex and cross-cutting sector, it is a central pillar of Namibia's developmental policies, and the Namibian Government is cognizant of the fact that health is a key determinant of economic growth, labour force productivity and poverty eradication.

The Ministerial Strategic Plan being launched today aims to address health inequities and increase access to quality health care services from the periphery and tertiary health care levels. It is aligned with national, regional and international development agendas.

Specifically, it is in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which accord primacy to people, the planet and prosperity. For people to prosper, they must be healthy and have access to quality health care, which is outlined in SDG 3 'Good Health and Well-being'. The eighth target of Goal 3 is to 'achieve universal health coverage' (UHC), and the Ministerial Strategic Plan is closely aligned to the assurance of universal health coverage (UHC) through improving access to services and quality of care.

Moving towards UHC requires strengthening health systems, robust financing structures and reducing out of pocket expenses for health care. Moreover, improving health service coverage and health outcomes depends on the availability, accessibility, and capacity of health workers to deliver quality people-centered integrated care. Access and quality of

service are critical elements to ensuring UHC, and we see these key elements reflected in the Ministerial Strategic Plan.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Ministerial Strategic Plan offers new opportunities for all development actors in the sector to enhance coordination of our health care support interventions.

Although multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms for specific diseases are in place, the overall coordination of the health sector towards its strategic objective has been lacking, and we are happy to be part of the birth of this new initiative, which will witness the inaugural Health Assemble for Namibia.

Ladies and Gentlemen, and in conclusion,

The UN, Namibia's 'Partner of Choice' continues to strive to better support the Government in terms of health. Specifically, through our recently launched United Nations Partnership Framework (UNPAF) 2019-2023, which outlines our coordinated response towards the health sector in support of the Namibian Government, fully aligned to the goals of NDP 5, the Harambee Prosperity Plan (HPP) as well as the Ministerial Strategy.

We, the UN System in Namibia, remain committed to expanding our synergies, nurturing our relationships and fostering our complementarities, to ensure the implementation of the Strategic Plan. Together, we can eliminate the barriers to quality health care access to ensure that no one in Namibia is left behind due to poor health.

I thank you.

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