



Namibian parliamentarians support the fight against TB

11 September, Windhoek: Namibia has one of the highest per capita burdens of Tuberculosis (TB) in the world. Although Namibia continues to register commendable progress in the fight against TB, alarmingly high numbers of cases continue to be reported in the country. In 2017, Namibia notified 8,854 patients with TB and of these, more than 800 were children under the age of 14 years. These numbers showed a decline of about 3% compared to the previous year.

While the trend is positive and encouraging, the numbers highlight a need for increased attention and focus to be paid to addressing TB in the country, so that all those with TB are found and started on treatment as soon as possible, thereby minimising further spread of the disease.

The Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services, Honourable Juliet Kavetuna highlighted this information at the launch of the Namibia TB Parliamentary Caucus which took place on 11 September 2018 in Windhoek. She said that the deaths of 700 people due to TB in 2017 are unacceptable given the size of the Namibian population and the fact that TB is curable.

Speaking at the same occasion, the World Health Organization (WHO) Representative to Namibia, Dr. Charles Sagoe-Moses said that launching the Namibia TB Parliamentary Caucus comes at a particularly pertinent time as global attention and focus has shifted to joint responsibility and commitments to ending TB by 2030.

“This year’s World TB Day theme was ‘Wanted: Leaders for a TB-free world’. I would therefore like to congratulate the Honourable members of the house for rising to this challenge to be leaders in this fight against TB. I wish to echo the words of the WHO Regional Director that, ‘A TB-free world will only be achieved through leaders who champion efforts to end TB at the local level’,” He said.

Dr. Sagoe-Moses commended Namibia on enabling access to treatment and social protection for patients with TB. Namibia’s new TB Strategic Plan addresses greater community engagement, transport reimbursement, income-generation effort and nutrition support for clients.

He further said that, “Domestic funding to TB has increased over the past ten years, and this remains the highest proportion of funding to the programme. The challenge to the country is to sustain this level of funding particularly as external resources dwindle. As

Honourable members of this Parliamentary Caucus, this will be one of your duties to ensure continued focus and attention to TB.”

The chair of the Namibia Parliamentary TB Caucus, Honourable Elna Dienda, Member of Parliament, said that the fight against TB should not only be left to the health sector but should encompass a multisectoral approach that includes every Namibian to contribute in whatever way possible.

“As Members of Parliament, we have the power to find out any weaknesses in our health system through oversight and take corrective action where necessary. We also have the power to correct any budgetary constraints associated with TB funding. We are better placed, as elected representatives to speak on behalf of the marginalised and raise awareness on the dangers of this killer disease,” Honourable Dienda concluded.