

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH ON BEING APPOINTED HONORARY COLONEL
OF KZN AREA MILITARY HEALTH UNIT (AMHU) ON 12 AUGUST 2004,
DURBAN DELIVERED BY DR Z.L. MKHIZE

Surgeon general, Lt General Janse van Rensburg, Officer Commanding the KZN Area Military Health Unit, Colonel Mbiza, Officers, Warrant Officers, NCO's, colleagues, friends, Ladies and gentlemen

It is a unique and singular honor for me to be appointed the Honorary Colonel of KwaZulu Natal Area Military Health Unit, which I hereby accept with humility, gratitude and deep appreciation. I wish to thank the Officer Commanding and his unit for nominating me for this prestigious appointment. I wish also to pay special tribute to the surgeon general for approving the nomination. I am fully aware of the enthusiasm in which this matter has been processed. I am even more conscious of the added responsibility that this appointment brings with it. I have accepted the honour and the responsibility as a reflection of my own determination to serve the Military Health Service particularly, and the people of South Africa in general.

I am reassured of the support from this unit not only because of the pledges of support that have been expressed today, but because of the relationship that has developed in the past ten years between the Department of Health of which I am responsible in this province, with leaders of the SAMHS provincially and nationally. This appointment takes forward the partnership between the Military and the Civilian arms of our health service, to a future level of deeper functional intergration. I am only too aware of the support that the SAMHS always gives to the Dept in times of crisis and hardship. The role that the SAMHS played during the days of labour disputes, when several hospitals were suddenly abandoned without personnel to nurse and look after them, it was SAMHS that looked after our people. When the cholera epidemic was raging affecting people in deep rural inaccessible areas, our people could count on SAMHS, of course, working side by side with the Department of Health. During the floods and malaria epidemics, SAMHS stood up to be

counted. I am therefore honoured to be associated with such an illustrious unit representing the pride and safety of our people.

The credentials of SAMHS in this province adds value to our fight for better life for our people. Together we shall march forward to fight such scourges in our society as HIV and AIDS, Tuberculosis, emerging infections and other forms of death from preventable diseases. HIV and AIDS remains one challenge that demands our scientific and medical skills, a major injection of our financial and human resources and our collective spirit of cooperation and goodwill as the people of South Africa. I am immensely impressed with your programme on fighting HIV and AIDS, and would wish to spend time visiting the project.

I have also been impressed by the ability of SAMHS to mobilise volunteers. In many of our health promotion campaigns the value of volunteers is more than can be financially quantified. I wish to lend my support to all your programmes.

I am committed to strengthening the partnership between the provincial Health Department and the AMHU, for the benefit of our people. I shall honour and preserve this partnership to ensure that it grows into stronger and deeper levels of current and future cooperation.

With respect, I accept the certificate and the Symbol of Office and commit myself to promoting the SAMHS and to serve with dignity befitting the integrity of this institution.

In closing I again wish to pay tribute to the Surgeon General Lt Gen Van Rensberg, and to my departed colleague the former surgeon General Masuku who spent his life in the service of our people.

Thank you.