

**Speech by MEC Neliswa Nkonyeni on the occasion of
the Provincial Health Consultative Forum at Royal
Show Grounds**

12 May 2006

I first want to express my appreciation to you for having responded positively to our invitation.

We consider it a blessing that in the same week that we are celebrating 10 years of the adoption of our Constitutions, we are also meeting here to act upon one requirement of that August document., in this instance, the **National Health Act**.

Before we delve deep on today's proceedings, I consider proper that we apologise for summoning you here at such a short notice.

I also want to profusely apologise to both **Nehawu** and **Denosa** for having committed the cardinal sin of cancelling the commemoration of the **International Nurses Day**.

I know, **Cassim Lekhoate** that Denosa had offered to assist in anyway you could in the preparations of this very important Day.

I also appreciate the contributions of the **Nehawu** leadership in this regard, having been briefed that you

were part of the committee that decided on **Mantobella Hospital** as the Institution to be visited on this very day.

Ladies and gentlemen, our meeting here today is in compliance with the National Health Council decision that expects all the provinces to have hosted Provincial Health Consultative Forums before the National one, that is to take place next week, **May 18 -19**.

Again we apologise for the haphazard manner the issues were handled.

As recognition to our hardworking nurses, I implored the Department to invite as many nurses as it could for this forum.

As such ladies and gentlemen, amongst us here, and spread across the breast of our country, are these Angels of Mercy that we must thank for looking after us in times of need.

Today I rise with the world in recognising and celebrating with them this **International Day of the Nurses**.

I call upon all these Angels to hold steadfast in the mist of the complexity of diseases that we are confronted with in this century.

Let them continue drawing strength from those who served before them, during our hard and brutal past that left our people maimed and dumped in the reserves:

Omama Albertina Sisulu,
Omama Albertina Luthuli,
Omama Cecilia Makiwane
Omama Adelaide Tambo,

and the host of others who up to this day continue serving beyond the call of duty.

I want it known today that every time I enter a hospital or a clinic, I get reminded of the solemn pledge that was pronounced by our hard working nurses on the **3rd of June** last year as we commemorated their Day at Curries Fountain in Durban. There they declared to the citizens of this beautiful land, the following:

- **"We solemnly pledge ourselves to the service of humanity and will endeavour to practice our profession with conscience and dignity.**
- **The total health of our patients will be our first consideration.**

- **We will hold in confidence all personal matters coming to our knowledge.**
- **We will not permit considerations of religion, nationality, race and social standing to intervene between our duty and our patients, and that,**
- **We will maintain the utmost respect for human life.**
- **We will maintain with all the means in our power, the honour and the noble traditions of our profession.**

On this important International Nurses Day, we say, you have earned our full respect for your unwavering commitment to partake in the fight to restore the dignity of all our citizens.

As a caring department, together with all the stakeholders, we are also saying we will always ensure that the rights of health workers to be treated with respect, is observed.

Ladies and gentlemen, coming to today's agenda, let it be clear to all of us that the formation of the **Provincial Health Consultative Forums** is informed by **Section 28 of the National Health Act**.

Of upper most importance for this forum, is the task to:

**Promote, and
Facilitate interaction, communication and
sharing of information on provincial health
issues.**

The Act gives us guiding principles about these forums, emphasising that their purpose is to **exchange information between government and all relevant stakeholders on provincial and municipal health issues**.

In order for us to be as inclusive and relevant as possible, the stakeholders that we need will be:

- Labour organisations that are active in the health sector
- Non-governmental and non-profit organisations whose business lies primarily in health
- For profit organisations such as hospital groups, pharmaceutical companies and health technology suppliers
- Faith based organisations that have an active interest in health care and health service delivery.

- Representative associations such as independent practitioner associations of doctors and other health professionals, as well as,
- Local environmental groups, support groups for chronic diseases, hospices, etc.

We are to be clear that the purpose is not to take decisions on matters of provincial or national health policy but to the forum to serve as a medium for exchanging views.

Of critical importance is for the government representatives and stakeholders to have an avenue whereby we are able to interact and communicate with each other in person.

As the MEC steering this department, the Act gives me an obligation to decide on a theme for a particular meeting, but advises that such a theme should be selected on the basis that it is of importance to the province.

The importance of this forum lies with the fact that the meetings thereof can be used to identify challenges and solutions to health care in the province.

For our work to be made easy, as a forum, particularly, in unpacking how the Department of Health in KwaZulu Natal operates, we have to be appraised of the guiding principles that include:

- The Millennium Development Goals
- Nepad Health Strategy
- State of the Nation Address
- State of the Province Address
- National Department of Health Priorities(2004-9)
- Provincial Priorities, and,
- other important policy statements, e.g. People's Contract

When our President, **Honourable Thabo Mbeki**, delivered his **State of the Nation address**, he said our country has entered **The Age of Hope**.

That Age of hope fellow compatriots must also be felt by the sick and the infirm we are all congregated here to serve.

As a Department, we are inviting you to support us in the attainment of the **Primary Goal of Public Health**, which is to have healthy people in healthy communities through:

- Prevention of epidemics and the spread of disease;
- Protecting communities against environmental hazards;
- Preventing injuries;
- Promoting and encouraging healthy behaviours;
- Responding to disasters and assisting communities in recovery; and

- Assuring the quality and accessibility of healthy services.

Ladies and gentlemen, the war against the spread of disease is one that calls for all of us to join hands. I am glad you came.

Remember as a Department we are committed to:

Fighting disease
Fighting poverty and
Giving hope.

I wish you wisdom in your deliberations.

Impilo iyasetshenzelwa.