

**Speech by KZN Health MEC Neliswa Nkonyeni on the occasion of the launch of the South African National Blood Service Donor Centre at Umlazi Mega City**

30 June 2007

South African National Blood Service CEO-- **Dr Loyiso**

**Mpuntscha**

US Consul General, His Excellency --**Eugene Young**

Ethekwini Deputy Mayor-- **Cllr Logie Naidoo**

National Medical Director ---**Dr Sam Gulube**

All our invited guests

Comrades and friends

All protocol observed

Ladies and gentlemen, I consider it proper to start by acknowledging and appreciating the positive contribution always made by the American Consul General, His Excellency, Eugene Young, particularly on health matters.

Your Excellency, we were humbled by the encouragement you gave to our Sangomas during their Graduation Ceremony late last year at the University of KwaZulu Natal as well as your support for the African Medicine as you recognise that it is being used by a large section of our population.

Fellow South Africans, I also want us to give a big round of applause to Dr Loyiso Mpuntscha and his team for their immense efforts as they try to transform the South African

National Blood Service into a truly African organisation depicting the real demography of our society. They need all our unwavering support.

Fellow citizens, I must say it is with utmost sincerity that we are all out to demonstrate that support and that we are behind them in their efforts as they try to woo more of our people to partake in this life saving endeavour.

We are more elated to assist because we know that millions of our people owe their lives to people they will never meet – people who donate their blood freely and without any reward. This, ladies and gentlemen, is what we regard as the true essence of Ubuntu.

We are also more encouraged because the theme of the World Blood Donor Day for 2007 is *“Safe Blood for Safe Motherhood.”* This theme, I must say, tallies well with our own as espoused in our budget speech of 2007 which says *‘Investing in women and children secures a healthy nation’*

We commend the selection of this theme as it emphasises the life-saving role of safe blood transfusion in maternal and perinatal care particularly to countries that have got a high maternal mortality rate as ours.

I think it is relevant that we today point out the five (5) direct complications **that account for more than 70% of the maternal deaths that we experience:**

- haemorrhage (25%),
- infection (15%),
- unsafe abortion (13%),

- **eclampsia** (very high blood pressure leading to seizures – 12%), as well as
- **obstructed labour (8%).**

Let us also remember that the Millennium Development Goals have also placed maternal and newborn health firmly on the agenda as one of the priorities we are all supposed to attain.

We need to recognise as a fact that globally every minute, a mother dies from complications in pregnancy and childbirth. How can we allow that when we know that healthy mothers and children are the real wealth of societies.

So today and in any other platform that we will use, we want you to know how important your blood is.

We also want to make use of this occasion to celebrate and thank those individuals who have been voluntarily donating their blood without any reward, except the knowledge that they have helped to save lives.

We want to say; we are more indebted particularly to those who give blood on a regular basis two, three or more times each year.

To the South African National Blood Service, we want to say, we welcome you as our partners.

We are saying, your marketing and educational efforts complement exactly what we stand for, as we are also saying **adopt safe and healthy lifestyles to protect your own health.**

Ladies and gentlemen the time has come for all of us to do the right thing all the time and to make means to partake in progressive practices geared towards uplifting mankind.

According to the World Health Organisation, all of us can donate blood with the exception of people who have:

- a history of hepatitis;
- recently visited a malaria area;
- had diarrhoea or who have vomited in the last 30 days;
- had dental work within the last three days;
- have current minor infections;
- have a history of sexually transmitted infections;
- have had a recent change of sexual partner;
- have any serious medical condition.

We appreciate the call by the South African National Blood Service emphasis on the youth that we expect them to be the people who must provide us with the safest blood possible for use wherever and whenever it is needed to save lives.

Our youth must remain guided by the theme pronounced by the World Health Day 2000 which correctly says **'Blood Saves Lives. Safe Blood Starts With Me.**

Kuyacaca ukuthi ngamunye ngamunye lapha kithina kuningi okufanele sikuyeke.

Let us all remember that the theme of 2007 World Health Day is – *Invest in Health, Build a Safer Future.*

Ngithi masizibheke, siziphephise, siqikelele ukuthi senza izinto ezingezukubeka engcupheni impilo yethu ukuze sizokwazi ukuba usizo nakwabanye abantu abasosizini.

Impilo iyasetshenzelwa!!!

I thank you.