

Speech by KZN Health MEC, Neliswa Nkonyeni, on the occasion of the International Council of Nurses Conference in Japan.

29 May 2007

Our warm felt greetings to all of you.

On behalf of all the sick; the frail and the traumatised people the world over, we want to thank you for the sterling work you do. We do appreciate that some of you work under difficult conditions; in war situations; in institutions that still lag behind in terms of technological advancements and yes, also with patients whose ailments are a threat to health workers themselves.

We do indeed appreciate what you do.

Our appreciation also goes to the Japanese Nursing Association for having agreed to co-host this august event.

We are all going to leave this beautiful country of self-respecting more wiser having learned more from each other as professionals; drawing knowledge from each other's experiences and more importantly taking with us good that we will gather as we take rounds in the health institutions of this developed country. This we hope is in accordance with the noble progressive goals of the International Council of Nurses, which are:

- to bring nursing together worldwide;
- to advance nurses and nursing worldwide;
- to influence health policies and strategies.

To the International Council of Nurses we want to express our sincere gratitude for having chosen South Africa as a country in which your 2009 Congress will be held. We are a continent that will enormously benefit from your stated objectives as you seek to ensure quality nursing care for all, sound health policies globally, the advancement of nursing knowledge, and the presence worldwide of a respected nursing profession and a competent and satisfied nursing workforce.

We are humbled by the fact that in more than hundred years of your existence as a federation, we are the first African country that will host nurses from 128 countries. We are humbled indeed.

Viva the children of Africa, Viva.

We are come and assist us in pointing to the right direction in the attainment of our strategic objectives, namely:

- Improve the quality of nurse educators through education and training
- To recruit and retain nurse educators
- Review nursing education and training curriculum in line with the National Qualifications Framework

- Ensure integration of theory and practice in nursing education
- Increase production of nurses especially professional nurse and clinical nurse specialists
- Promote continuous professional development among nurses to improve skills
- To improve the working conditions and service benefits for nurse educators and all nurses, and lastly,
- To improve research skills and competencies among nurse educators and nurses.

Yes the whole of Africa will benefit. This gesture fits in well with Our Honourable President Thabo Mbeki's affirmation that this indeed, is an African Century.

Today Africa can proudly call on the world and say be with us as we host:

2009 International Council of Nurses Congress; and  
the 2010 World Cup.

Again to the International Council of Nurses we are saying thank you for choosing our country as a platform for nursing development, for delving and scrutinizing health through its policies, partnerships, advocacy, leadership development and creating invaluable forums for networking.

As a developing country with its fair share of acute diseases and diverse socio economic strata, we promise to provide you with a Congress in 2009 that is both unique and truly educational.

Guided by the words of the great poet, **Henry Wadsworth Longfellow**, in his work, The Psalm of Life, we concur:

*'Life is real! Life is earnest*

*And the grave is not its goal;*

*We can make our lives sublime,*

*And departing, leave behind us*

*Footprints on the sand of time.'*

I thank you.