

Remarks and introduction of National Health Minister, Dr Manto Tshabalala Msimang on the occasion of the signing of cooperation agreement between the Department of Health and the South African Health Military Services in Durban.

21 August 2008

Programme Directors – D G Thami Mseleku

Hon Minister of Health – Dr Manto Tshabalala Msimang

Hon Minister of Defence – Mosiuo Lekota

Acting Head of the Department of Health - Dr Y L Mbele

SANDF Surgeon General- Gen Ramlakan

Hospital CEO – Mrs F G Zondi

Representatives from SANDF

Department of Health officials

All compassionate health care cadres

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today we have come together to reaffirm our commitments as stipulated in our country's **Bill of Rights** in particular the Right to Health as it says:

*'A comprehensive national health service shall be established linking health workers, community organisations, state institutions, private medical schemes and individual medical practitioners so as to provide hygiene education, preventative medicine and health care delivery to all.*

In 1994 the African National Congress, with the technical support of the World Health Organisation and UNICEF produced a document entitled **A National Health Plan for South Africa**. Here it was stated that the challenge facing South Africans is to design a comprehensive programme to redress social and economic injustices, to eradicate poverty, reduce waste, increase efficiency and to promote greater control by communities and individuals over all aspects of their lives.

In the health sector, ladies and gentlemen, this is meant to entail the complete transformation of the national health care delivery system and all relevant institutions. Envisaged here is the attainment among other things, of the following imperatives:

- emphasising that all health workers have an equally important role to play in the health system, and ensuring that team work is a central component of the health system.
- encouraging and developing comprehensive health care practices that are in line with international norms, ethics and standards.
- introducing management practices that are aimed at efficient and compassionate health care delivery.
- reducing the burden and risk of disease affecting the health of all South Africans.

Today we are grateful to be joined by the Honourable Minister of Defence, Mosiua Lekota, to solidify a partnership that will see to it that those ideals are put into practice.

We are all elated and encouraged by this pact that will allow the Department of Health and the South African Health Military Services to pool their professional health care cadres, resources and experience to tend to the traumatized; the infirm and the poor. Yes, we are bound to make an impact.

We more so appreciate the fact that this unison had to be brokered and enacted in this beautiful province regarded as the epicentre of diseases where health care facilities aren't sufficient to attend to the needs of the population.

We are also mindful of the fact that during last year's protracted civil service strike, we would have lost many lives had it not been for the courageous and timely intervention by the South African Health Military Services in institutions like the King Edward Hospital. I don't think we are late to thank Minister Lekota for that.

Programme Director I am tasked to introduce our lovable Mama, the Honourable Minister of Health, Dr Manto Tshabalala Msimang.

Our minister emphasises all the time that all structures in our country should be mobilised to address the high incidence of treatable, yet potentially lethal diseases.

In our dealings with the patients and the frail, she has taught us to be always guided by the Patients Right Charter and the Batho Pele principles.

In this month of August, we are pleased to be with her knowing very well that she is closely involved in the fight aimed at the protection and promotion of women and children's rights.

She also served the country as the Deputy Minister of Justice where she was instrumental in the improvement and enactment of these rights.

It was befitting that in 1998 she was appointed Chairperson of the Gender Committee in the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress.

Dr Manto Tshabalala Msimang also succeeded in taking her fight for the restoration of the dignity of every citizen up to the World Health Assembly where served as Chairperson of the Africa region in 2004.

For a long time to come, Dr Manto Tshabalala Msimang will be celebrated by this country's poor and rich alike for leading the war against private health care providers in their sinister ways of inflating the prices.

Dr Mantombazane Tshabalala Msimang, a mother to two daughters and a granny to a young boy was elected to her current post on June, 17, 1999.

Malibongwe!!

IMPILO IYASETSHENZELWA