

Speech by KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo on the occasion of the 20th celebration of the Health Systems Trust at Dockyard Hotel in Durban

3 May 2012

Colleagues and Friends,

Good Evening

It really is a time of joy for all of us here and to the multitudes of our people who have in the past 20 years benefited from the wisdom and forward looking health care initiatives that have emanated from this august organisation.

We pay tribute to the Founding Trustees: Dr Christopher Garbers; Prof David Power; Prof Jocelyne Kane-Berman; Dr Jairam Reddy (the first chairperson); Dr Olive Shisana; Dr Nicky Padayachee; Dr Nkosazana Dlamini -Zuma, *isigagayi* that has contributed enormously in the development of health in this country including initiating the Cuba – South Africa Doctor training programme, Prof Wiseman Nkuhlu as well as the hard working Prof Rachel Gumbi, who has now turned around the situation in the once bad performing hospital in this Province, that is Prince Mshiyeni Memorial Hospital.

We also recall the good management practices that came with the employ of David Harrison who was the first director of the HST.

We pay tribute to David Mametja who was appointed as executive director in 1996. We recognize the role played by Marian Jacobs who took over as chairperson in 1998 and Dr Zola Njongwe who assumed the

role in the year 2000. We cannot forget the role played by Lillian Dudley who in 2001 was appointed as the managing director and later as the CEO in March 2005.

We recognize Patrick Masobe who took the chairmanship in 2003; Dr Thobile Mbengashe appointed as CEO in 2007 as well as Dr Seadimo Chaba elected as Chairperson of the Board of Trustees in 2008. We also pay tribute to Ms. Jeanette Hunter appointed as the CEO in 2008 and Professor Welile Shasha elected as chairman of the Board of Trustees in 2010.

Ladies and gentlemen, let us also acknowledge and applaud the generous gestures and insight of this organization's Funders in the name of the Kaiser Family Foundation, Kagiso Trust as well as the National Department of Health.

Happy twentieth anniversary indeed!

As we celebrate the successes and accomplishments accrued over the years we need to first pay tribute to the pioneers who came together in 1987 to form the National Progressive Primary Health Care Network (NPPHCN), chief among them, our Honourable Premier, Dr Zweli Mkhize, on whose platform and glory I am standing on tonight. This was an organisation that was formed to fight glaring disparities in the provision of health care and most appropriately chose to focus on advocacy and lobbying on health care issues for rural communities and women's well-being. In our celebration tonight we should be able to say, we owe more of our progressive health care policies and current all embracing health legislations to that era.

Recognising that the apartheid regime was on its knees and that time for its segregation policies was nearing its end the same pioneers who coined the National Progressive Primary Health Care Network, came together in 1992 and gave birth to this highly respected organisation called Health Systems Trust that has grown from strength to strength over the intervening two decades.

It is an undeniable fact that over the years this organisation has positively impacted in the strengthening of health systems and in the shaping of health policies as well as the delivery of health care in our country as well as the SADC Region as a whole.

As government, we are very proud of the Health Systems Trust for the ongoing support we are provided with at every level of the health system – that is, from facility and district to provincial and national levels. We will continue engaging and frequently requesting advice on policy and implementation, on evaluation of health services and in the provision of technical support on a variety of issues.

As politicians; policy makers; clinicians and media houses, we are also truly indebted to this organization's annual well researched and balanced publication known as the South African Health Review. Yes it's true; there is something for everyone in the South African Health Review as it tackles topics that amongst others entail district systems development, drug supply management, human resource development, informatics, legislation, finance, environmental health, mental health, nutrition, sexually transmitted diseases as well as HIV and AIDS. It is an accomplishment indeed to have a flagship product that is widely read, used and quoted as an authoritative reference work in this country and

abroad, providing an in-depth analysis of policies and practices affecting the provision of health services, as well as insight to the degree of success that has been achieved in policy implementation.

We also appreciate and utilize the information gleaned from the **District Health Barometer (DHB)** as it provides us with a snapshot of the overall performance of our own districts as well as the whole public sector across the provinces in our country.

We also laud the pivotal role played by this organisation in taking over fiduciary responsibilities of the Love Life magazine, an entity that assisted in making HIV and AIDS a topical manageable disease that can inflict anyone.

Over the years you have assisted us in shaping our thoughts and influencing our approach on the number of key areas and we also value support given in priority programmes such as Maternal, Child and Women's Health; STI Initiative, the Male Sexuality and Reproductive Health projects.

We now invite you to assist us as a Province in working towards attaining what is possible in as far as addressing global health priorities as tabulated in the Millennium Development Goals. We also need support and guidance in our quest to re-engineer primary health care in our Province; we would love to have a population that is knowledgeable on disease prevention and management.

As you celebrate the 20 years of your existence, it is pleasing to note that you are also planning on the coming 20 years as to how best you can take our country forward. For us as Province, we invite you to join us on our quest to succeed in laying a solid ground for the implementation of the National Health Insurance.

We have covered a lot already as 70 Hospitals; 17 Community Health Centres, and 557 Clinics {644 facilities in total} have been assessed in the National Core Standards Baseline Audit. The National Office has also completed a competency profiling of all Hospital Managers.

We have also held a successful Health Summit in September 2011, with NHI as one of the main commissions. Our Head Office Senior Management Organisational Review and Alignment is nearing completion and the drive to increase enrolment for the Cuban Doctor Program, targeting 434 for 2012/13 in collaboration with parents is also proceeding well.

You may advice on how best or get involved in the community wide awareness campaigns on the NHI implications. Scope for collaboration will always be wide. Again we thank you for your support and look forward to the next coming exiting 20 years that will usher a revolution on how health care is managed and provided in our country.

May all the departed patrons that have been an integral part of this organisation including our stalwart, Dr Manto Tshabalala Msimang always be there as a guide and a source of strength to those who are serving.

We wish you a very good evening in this beautiful and warm city.