STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBA, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA ON THE OCCASION OF THE 8\textsuperscript{TH} STOP CERVICAL, PROSTATE AND BREAST CANCER IN AFRICA (SCCA) CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION

20 JULY 2014

WINDHOEK

*Check Against Delivery*
Director of Ceremonies,
Right Honourable Hage Geingob, Prime Minister,
Madame Penehupifo Pohamba, First Lady of the Republic of Namibia, and Hostess of the 8th Stop Cervical, Breast and Prostate Cancer in Africa Conference,
Honourable Theo-Ben Gurirab, Speaker of the National Assembly,
Honourable Dr Richard Kamwi, Minister of Health and Social Services,
Esteemed Dr Magreth Chan, Director General of the World Health Organisation,
Madam Maria da Luz Dai Guebuza, First Lady of the Republic Mozambique and Chairperson of the Forum of First Ladies Against Cervical and Breast Cancer in Africa,
Esteemed Princess Nikky Onyeri, Founder and Executive Director of the Princess Nikky Onyeri Breast Cancer Foundation,
Honourable Ministers,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Honourable Governor of Khomas Region and Other Governors,
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Distinguished Representatives of UN Agencies and Development Co-operation Partners,
Distinguished Members of the Business Community,
Esteemed Members of the Task Force for the 8th Stop Cervical, Breast and Prostate Cancer in Africa Conference,
Distinguished Members of the Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start by thanking our First Lady for spearheading the efforts to host this important event, the 8th Stop Cervical, Breast and Prostate Cancer in Africa Conference. On 27th November last year, I joined the First Lady and other distinguished guests to launch an awareness campaign to sensitise our people and the international community about the hosting of this event.
The Members of the Task Force, the Secretariat and all those who have been involved in the preparatory work have been working hard for the past eight months to put the necessary facilities and logistics in place for the hosting of this Conference. They deserve our commendation.

The hosting of this Conference reaffirms the dedication of the Princess Onyeri Breast Cancer Foundation, working together with the Forum of African First Ladies Against Cancer and indeed all individuals and partner organisations that have come on board to work together to spread awareness and combat breast, cervical and prostate cancer, as well as other diseases.

Available statistics show that non-communicable diseases such as cancer have become some of the major public health concerns, not only in Africa, but also in other parts of the world.
In 2004, Member States tasked the World Health Organization to develop a *Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health*, aimed at reducing non-communicable diseases, including cancer.

The Strategy encourages Member States to develop, strengthen and implement national and community policies and action plans to improve diets and increase physical activities amongst their populations. Last week, the UN General Assembly met to review progress on the implementation of the Strategy and propose actions to intensify these efforts.

Director of Ceremonies,

According to the 2014 World Health Organisation Report, 38 million people die from Non-Communicable Diseases each year. These include cancer, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and lung disease.
More than 28 million, or 73.7 per cent of these deaths occur in developing countries. In order to address this situation, UN Member States have agreed on Global Action Plan, proposed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to combat the epidemic and reduce premature deaths from non-communicable diseases by as much as 25 per cent by the year 2025.

I wish to state that Namibia has adapted the 2012 WHO Guidelines on Comprehensive Cervical Cancer Prevention and Control. As part of this intervention, our government promotes healthy life styles that include healthy eating, exercising and regular medical check-ups to facilitate early detection and treatment of cancer related diseases.

Director of Ceremonies,

Cancer has become one of the major non-communicable diseases in the world.
Regrettably, incidences of cancer continue to grow at an alarming rate, due to poor diets, lifestyle choices as well as environmental and behavioural factors. This highlights the urgent need to implement prevention and control strategies to curb the disease, deaths and disabilities caused by cancer.

According to the 2014 World Cancer Report, produced by the International Association for Cancer Research, 14 million people are diagnosed with cancer annually. Breast, cervical and prostate cancers are among the most common cancers together with lung and colorectal cancer.

Urgent action is, therefore, needed to ameliorate suffering of those affected, and to reduce the impact of these diseases on national health systems and economic development of our countries. At present, breast, cervical and prostate cancers are among the top three cancers in Namibia.
Director of Ceremonies,

Namibia will continue to implement measures and policies aimed at providing care to those affected. It is for this reason that our Government has modernised and expanded the Nuclear Medicine Units at two of the main hospitals in the country, here in Windhoek and in Oshakati, respectively.

Our Government will spare no effort to fight cancer. We will continue to allocate the necessary resources to strengthen our interventions, provide the needed services to our people, and implement on-going awareness campaigns to sensitize the population.

Furthermore, Government will intensify measures to control the use of tobacco. In 2005, Namibia ratified the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, as one of the tools in our fight to reduce tobacco use.
In terms of the Tobacco Control Regulations, which came into force on 1\textsuperscript{st} July 2014, all public buildings and facilities in Namibia have been declared as non-smoking areas. We will continue to spread the message to our people, especially to the youth that tobacco is dangerous and that it is one of the major causes of various forms of cancer.

Through the Ministry of Health and Social Services, our Government is hard at work to make \textit{Human Papilloma Virus} vaccine available at our public health facilities. This is part of our comprehensive cervical cancer prevention and control plan, which also includes screening and immediate treatment for pre-cancer as well as referrals for further diagnosis and treatment in all cases whenever necessary.

Furthermore, all our health facilities have been capacitated to provide health education for women on self-breast examination.
In addition, all women with suspected breast cancer are referred to Referral Hospitals for diagnosis and treatment as early as possible.

Namibian mothers are encouraged to breast-feed for six months exclusively, as means of reducing the incidence of breast cancer. Mammography and other diagnostic services to detect cancer among women and men are also available. Namibian men are encouraged to be aware of the early signs of prostate cancer and the need for regular medical check-ups in order to facilitate early treatment, whenever needed.

For those undergoing treatment for different forms of cancer, Government provides social grants to assist them and their families as they cope with the challenges. Government is currently developing a Comprehensive Palliative Care Programme for cancer patients.
Cancer support groups, such as the Cancer Association of Namibia and others are doing commendable work in providing emotional and psychological support to cancer patients. They also provide counselling to patients and their families.

I would like to acknowledge the significant support rendered by our development co-operation partners, private sector, and NGOs, to our efforts to combat cancer. We count on their continued support.

I would also like to thank the Governments of the countries represented at this Conference, the First Ladies, the Honourable Speakers of Parliament from different countries, the Esteemed Director General of the World Health Organization, and all the delegates for coming to join hands and to plan together in order to find ways and means of combating cervical, breast and prostate cancer in Africa. I wish you all successful deliberations.
It is now my pleasure to declare the 8th *Stop Cervical, Breast and Prostate Cancer in Africa Conference* officially open.

I thank you.