

Speech by KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo on the occasion of the official opening of the BHP Billiton / Carte Blanche Paediatrics Centre of Excellence project at King Edward VIII

5 June 2012

Dr OSB Baloyi and Hospital Management

Hospital Board Members

George Mazarakis and Karolina Andropoulos from Carte Blanche

Patria van Rooyen and other representatives from M-Net

Dr Xolani Mkhwanazi and other representatives from BHP Billiton

Representatives from Sakhiwo Health; Narvo Construction; Ekcon; S & W Consulting Engineering as well as those from the Hospital Design group

Members from the Media

Warm greetings to everyone

On behalf of our Honourable Premier, Dr Zweli Mkhize who represent all the people of KwaZulu, allow us today to say thank you to The Carte Blanche Making a Difference Trust and BHP Billiton for choosing this kind of a project as their sphere of social investment. This is one project that will not just change the community lives but it will provide quality health care for all children in surrounding areas and to those referred to from health care institutions around KwaZulu Natal. This project by design will also positively impact on our quest to attain *A long and healthy life for all South Africans*

Before I go any further, I need to indicate that this project is by far one of the biggest single private donations ever to be made to a state facility. All the people of KZN are truly blessed and thankful as I hope; everybody knows and understands that King Edward Hospital besides being used as a referral institution is the biggest hospital in this Province and the second largest in South Africa.

It is also an institution that was established in 1936 and globally revered for its rich history as a facility that nurtured and groomed a number of specialists and struggle icons who studied and graduated at the Nelson Mandela Medical School as it is called now.

It also have a great historical value as we are told that it was from the vantage point of this facility that King Shaka observed the arrival of the first White people at Umtateni. It is thus understandable that the reigning Monarch, His Majesty, King Goodwill Zwelithini wants the Hospital to be renamed Kangelamankengane.

We are indeed very elated that BHP Billiton and Carte Blanche as big conglomerations have listened and acted upon the invitation of our Government led by uMsholuzi for a Public Private Partnership arrangement as a way of solving our country's problems.

As government we are happy that we have partners that understand and accept that healthy and equitable societies are characterised by an environment where children are able to grow into healthy, secure and productive adults.

As a result, in the true sense of "*making a difference campaign*" and as part of their giving back to the community strategy, today we are proud

recipients of this Specialist Paediatrics hospital which encompasses a 25 bedded In-patients wards; a High Care Unit; Neonatal care equipment ranging from a Brainz Instrument and ultrasound; ventilators; incubators; infant warmers and multi-parameter monitors for the benefit of hundreds of premature and full-term babies and toddlers treated yearly at this hospital.

These facilities come at the right moment as our country is tasked with a responsibility of meeting the Millennium Development Goals particularly **MDG 4** that calls for the *Reduction of Child Mortality ratio*.

Programme Director, it should be noted that every year in our continent more than 1 million infants die within their first 24 hours of life due to the lack of adequate health services, including midwifery care. We are happy that working with BHP Billiton and Cart Blanche we will now be able to provide a safe and supported environment for our childbearing women to give birth to.

This particular project is also going to add impetus to the progress recorded on the integrated management of Childhood illnesses (IMCI) which is being implemented in all of our Primary Health Care Clinics that has seen reductions in the rate of children dying from pneumonia and other infectious diseases.

We all accept that the key challenges in reducing under-5 morbidity and mortality lie in combating the main causes of deaths among children which are diarrhoea, lower respiratory tract infections, peri-natal deaths associated with TB, HIV and AIDS, and malnutrition. With the advent of more facilities of this nature in our province we are indeed on the right

path in our endeavours of strengthening and enhancing the quality and reach of primary health care for children

As a Department we are happy with progress made in expanding the reach of PMTCT, ARV treatment and nutrition programmes as means to prevent mother to child transmission of HIV, as well as the provision of life-long nutrition and antiretroviral therapy which remain key to reducing associated deaths among children. We have trained and provided nurses to lead the way in addressing the above. We depend on them for the implementation of the Expanded Programme on Immunization which recently introduced new vaccines to reduce diarrhoea (rotavirus vaccine) and pneumonia (pneumococcal vaccine).

We have also created district teams of specialists; obstetricians, paediatricians, anaesthetists and advanced midwives to provide leadership and restore the use of time-tested clinical protocols and rapidly improve the outcome after birth by close supervision in hospitals and clinics.

We want to say thank you again to Carte Blanche for publicising our plight and inviting other conglomerations to adopt this initiative as part of their social responsibility programme.

Working together we will definitely achieve more to provide quality care with human dignity; including improvements to the clinical management of care at all levels of the healthcare delivery system.

I thank you.