

**STATEMENT BY JOHN MUTORWA, MINISTER OF
BASIC EDUCATION, SPORT AND CULTURE,
DELIVERED AT THE HIV/AIDS WORKSHOP, HELD AT
SWAKOPMUND ON 12 MARCH 2001, 08H30**

- 1.1 I thank the joint committee of the Ministries of Basic Education, Sport and Culture and Higher Education, Training and Employment Creation (MBESC and MHETEC), for having organized this important Workshop. I thank you for allowing me, through your kind invitation, to participate in its deliberations by making this official opening statement. I also thank the Consultancy of Mobile Task Team on HIV/AIDS in Education (MTT in short) from the RSA for your valuable input to the realization of this workshop. All participants, thank you for coming.

- 1.2 Our world of the twenty first Century is continuously moving forwards at a fast rate. The human race is surely also moving ahead and in some cases reversing. In many respects, however, the mere existence of the human race - the people - on our planet earth is seriously and vigorously being challenged and threatened by armed forces-soldiers - who do not need; neither use sophisticated or expensive weapons and ammunition; to successfully conduct their wars of extermination. These dangerous soldiers do not need territorial space (land, sea or air) to execute their wars from. In most cases, the seed of eventual deterioration destruction and death is planted in most innocent, intimate, private and personal circumstances.

- 1.3 It is a fact, that as we closed the last chapter of the twentieth century and as we turned on page one of the twenty first Century, there is abundant evidence to convince all of us that, humanity has witnessed and is witnessing significant developments and innovations, especially in the fields of SCIENCE and TECHNOLOGY. In many parts of the world, in many countries, in many villages, in many schools and in many families today; however, such breakthroughs are seriously threatened and destroyed by the HIV/AIDS pandemic – a pandemic that has descended upon humanity like a dark cloud, that brings in its wake, fatal and devastating storms, thunder and floods. What is the reality today? The reality is that: many brilliant brains of today and of tomorrow who are and ought to have been responsible for more scientific discoveries are dying and many still, will die. Is the future of the human race itself not at stake here? While the best scientific brains in the world, continue to search for a permanent solution - a cure for HIV/AIDS, this workshop is being called upon to draft a prioritised and implementable NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN. Such a plan will help us to develop appropriate and effective responses in combating HIV/AIDS, with specific reference to the Education, Culture and Training Sector, in our country, Namibia.
- 1.4 Chapter four (4) of the Report of the Presidential Commission of 1999 on Education, Culture and Training is exclusively devoted to HIV/AIDS and its serious negative impacts on education and training. For example, on page 61 of the Report, the following, amongst others, is said: “If the present rapid spread of the disease is not halted and reversed, the population of the country will be greatly reduced and the

plans for national economic and personal development will be nullified", (Commission Report, page 61). To quote UNAM's Report on HIV/AIDS, which summarizes the proceedings of a workshop held from 9-11 October 2000: "The threat posed to Africa by HIV/AIDS continues to increase. The epidemic is not restricted by national boundaries. Neither is it confined by age, gender, social status or learning environment. Once it has gained a foothold, it can affect every part of a country, every level of a society, every aspect of an institution (page 3).

- 1.5 I fully associate myself with the Namibia National Teachers' Union (NANTU) when, they, in their policy document on HIV/AIDS, inter alia, state the following: "HIV/AIDS is conceptualized as having the potential to affect education through different mechanisms, i.e.: reduction in demand, reduction in supply, reduction in availability of resources; adjustment in response to the special needs of a rapidly increasing number of orphans; adaptation to new interactions both within school and between school and communities, curriculum modification, altered roles that have to be adopted by teachers and the education system, the ways in which schools and the education system are organized, the planning and management of the system and donor support for education (p.5).

Permit me to conclude my opening statement as follows. Distinguished Workshop participants: in your deliberations and interactions, please, do remember that you have also come here, on behalf of many people, in your country, in our country, schools and training institutions; in order to pause

and solemnly, though very seriously reflect about the manner in which to further fortify our faith, as citizens of Africa and of our respective nation states; but also to renew our courage and resolve to make strong our inner spirit in order to fight on and eventually defeat this killer called HIV/AIDS. I believe that the education system is quite capable to play a pro-active role, in instilling the necessary knowledge, beliefs, norms, values, skills and attitudes, especially for children and young people, to maintain healthy social behaviour and also to make informed decisions when it comes to matters affecting their sexuality and sexual practices.

I look forward to the final recommendations of this workshop, wherefrom, an implementable NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN would be developed. I now declare the workshop, officially opened.

I thank you

References

1. NANTU Policy on HIV/AIDS, December 2000.
2. UNAM: HIV/AIDS – The Challenge for Tertiary Institutions, Printech, Windhoek, December 2000.
3. HIV/AIDS Charter of Rights: Legal Assistance Centre, Windhoek, 2000
4. 1999 Presidential Commission on Education, Culture and Training, Capital Press, Windhoek, 1999.