



**REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

**OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT**

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY HER EXCELLENCY DR. NETUMBO NANDI-  
NDAITWAH, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA, ON  
THE OCCASION OF THE  
INAUGURATION OF THE FIRST STATE-OWNED MAGNETIC  
RESONANCE IMAGING (MRI) MACHINE IN NAMIBIA**

**09 SEPTEMBER 2026**

**WINDHOEK CENTRAL  
HOSPITAL**

- **Director of Ceremonies, Mr. Penda Ithindi, Executive Director, Ministry of Health and Social Services;**
- **Hon. Dr. Esperance Luvindao, Minister of Health and Social Services;**
- **Honourable Ministers and Members of Cabinet present;**
- **Honourable Suzan Hambelela Ndjaleka, Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services;**
- **Honourable Members of Parliament present;**
- **Executive Directors and Senior Government Officials present;**
- **Dr. Shitaleni Herman, Medical Superintendent, Windhoek Central Hospital;**
- **Dr Alfons Amoomo, Deputy Executive Director, Ministry of Health and Social Services;**
- **Distinguished Guests;**
- **Members of the media;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

**Good morning.**

1. It is with profound recollection that 36 years ago, Namibia attained its Independence and assumed the responsibility of building a nation in which essential services and opportunities would be accessible to all Namibian people, irrespective of their socio-economic background. Healthcare has always been central to that responsibility. Since Independence, we have worked steadily to build a public health system that is inclusive, equitable and responsive to the needs of our population. We have expanded primary healthcare services in our communities and improved services at district, intermediate and national referral hospitals. We have trained Namibian healthcare professionals and introduced highly specialised services, including cardiac, neurosurgical, paediatric and other complex clinical interventions in our public hospitals.

2. Today, we can look back with pride at the progress we have made. But we must also acknowledge that much remains to be done, noting well that national development is a continuous process. It requires sustained investment, decisiveness and a commitment to improve the lives of all our people, one step at a time. One such demonstrated commitment is the deliberate national budgetary allocation to the health sector, coming in only second to the education sector.
3. Today, we take one such important step. For the first time since Independence, Namibia's public health sector has now acquired its first government-owned and government-operated Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) service. This is a historic milestone for Namibia and one of the stepwise achievements of the 8th Presidential Administration. More importantly, it is a milestone for the approximately 2.7 million Namibians who depend on our public healthcare.
4. Notably, our public health sector serves approximately 85 percent of Namibia's population. Behind this figure are the Namibian people: a child, a mother, a father, a worker, a pensioner and a patient living with a serious illness. When the Government strengthens the public health system, we invest directly in the dignity, wellbeing and productive capacity of our nation. A healthy population is essential for a productive workforce, a resilient economy and a prosperous country. It is for this reason that the health sector is one of the eight priority areas for the 8<sup>th</sup> Administration, with the specific objective to improve the quality of life for all Namibians.

### **Director of Ceremonies,**

5. The MRI technology has been available in Namibia's private sector for more than 20 years. Until today, however, state patients requiring MRI examinations had to be referred to private facilities, often at considerable cost to the Government, and with added inconvenience and delays for patients.

6. In the last 5 years alone, the Ministry of Health and Social Services referred more than 4,000 patients to the private sector for MRI services, at a total cost exceeding N\$80 million. This amounts to an average expenditure of more than N\$16 million per year. The Government has now invested forty-nine million, seven hundred and ninety-five thousand, nine hundred and four Namibia Dollars (**N\$49,795,904**) in establishing this MRI facility at Windhoek Central Hospital. This amount includes the MRI machine, accessories and the infrastructure upgrades required to house and operate it.
7. I am informed that, if properly maintained, the MRI machine has an expected lifespan of approximately 20 years. Based on the average expenditure on private-sector referrals over the last 5 years, comparable referrals over 20 years could have costed the Government approximately **N\$320 million**. This means that, even after allowing for the costs of staffing, operation and maintenance, this investment has the potential to generate substantial long-term savings and shared service efficiencies within the healthcare system. At this historical average referral cost, the initial investment could broadly be recovered within approximately 3 years. Thereafter, the Government would retain significant value by providing the service within the public health system, rather than continuously and wholly purchasing it from private providers. This is not to discount the complementarity, partnerships and shared value with the private sector role players.
8. But the most important return to this investment cannot be measured in monetary terms alone. It will be measured in earlier diagnoses, better treatment decisions, reduced turnaround times and improved outcomes for patients. It will be measured in a family receiving an answer sooner, a doctor having the information needed to guide treatment, and a patient avoiding the financial and emotional burden of being referred outside the public system.
9. The introduction of MRI services in our public health sector is fundamentally about equity. Advanced medical technology must not be

reserved only for those who can afford private healthcare. The pensioner dependent on a state pension has the same dignity as a person with private medical aid. Equally, a patient who cannot afford private medical imaging deserves the same appropriate and timely investigation as a patient who can afford private medical imaging.

10. This MRI machine will strengthen the diagnosis and management of neurological, spinal, abdominal, pelvic and other complex medical conditions. It will support doctors in making better-informed clinical decisions and contribute to improved patient management and outcomes. This facility will therefore bring modern technology closer to ordinary Namibians. It will help narrow the gap between what healthcare technology can provide and what our people can access.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

11. The MRI machine at Windhoek Central Hospital is an important beginning, but it is not the end of our journey. To bring about a system change, there has to be an entry point and next steps. During this financial year, Government will commence with the procurement and installation of the second MRI machine at **Oshakati Intermediate Hospital**. This will expand access to advanced diagnostic imaging in the northern populous regions and reduce the need for patients to travel long distances to Windhoek, or to be referred to private facilities at a high price tag.
12. This is not the only medical equipment technology that the Government, through the Ministry of Health and Social Services has injected in the public health system during the year. Guided by the principle of cost efficiency, the Ministry has directly procured a myriad of new medical equipment directly from manufacturers such as Computed Tomography (CT) scanners, X-Ray, Ultra Sound, ECG, CTG and anesthetic machines as well as multiple patient monitors that have been distributed across the various health facilities in the country.

13. Our goal is clear: access to specialised healthcare must not be determined by geography. This commitment is also reflected in the Government's plans to construct hospitals in several parts of the country, another set of impactful investment undertakings since Namibia's Independence. We are embarking on the construction of:
- 13.1. Windhoek District Hospital;
  - 13.2. Ondangwa District Hospital;
  - 13.3. Nkurenkuru District Hospital; and
  - 13.4. Otjiwarongo Referral Hospital.
14. This is against the backdrop of equally impactful gains over the years. We have done well to expand primary healthcare, and we will continue to build clinics and upgrade clinics to health centres. Namibia now has **297 clinics and 43 health centres** across the country. Primary healthcare remains the foundation of Universal Health Coverage. At the same time, our people require more specialised health services closer to their communities. That is why we are complementing our network of clinics and health centres with district, intermediate and referral hospitals capable of providing a wide range of health services.
15. It is on the basis of these system-wide investments that Namibia continues to make meaningful progress towards Universal Health Coverage. According to the World Health Organization's Universal Health Coverage Index, Namibia is ranked between **65 and 70 percent**, placing us among the stronger performers in the African region in terms of progress towards Universal Health Coverage.
16. We have also performed well in relation to out-of-pocket health expenditure. The average for the WHO African Region is approximately 35.8%, while the WHO benchmark is below 20 % of a country's current health expenditure. Namibia's comparatively low rate of **8 %** reflects the important role the Government plays in financing and providing healthcare services, enhancing greater and more inclusive access to services.

17. In addition, approximately **87 % of Namibia's population lives within a 10-kilometre radius of a health facility**. These achievements are important, but they do not mean that our work is complete. We must continue improving access to primary healthcare and expand access to specialised health services, including diagnostic imaging. Access is not only about distance; it is also about affordability, availability, quality, dignity and continuity of care.

### **Director of Ceremonies,**

18. Purchasing an MRI machine alone does not constitute development. We must also build the capacity to operate, maintain and improve this technology. I am informed that Namibian medical staffs were sent to South Africa for specialised MRI training. I commend these healthcare professionals and the entire radiology team of Windhoek Central Hospital. Your expertise will determine the success and sustainability of this investment. We must continue training radiographers, radiologists, medical physicists, biomedical engineers, specialist nurses and other professionals required to support advanced healthcare services.
19. As we celebrate this milestone, we must also be honest about the challenges confronting our public health sector. The Government is fully cognisant of the pressures experienced by patients, healthcare workers and communities. These include infrastructure needs, staffing constraints, waiting times and challenges relating to the stable supply of pharmaceuticals.
20. The Government and in particular, the Ministry of Health and Social Services, is working hard to address these difficulties, including strengthening procurement and supply-chain systems.

We appeal for the support, patience and cooperation of the public as we undertake this work. Improving public healthcare is a shared responsibility involving Government, healthcare workers, communities, suppliers, the business community and development partners.

21. I therefore call upon the Windhoek Central Hospital management and staff to safeguard this facility, maintain it and use it responsibly. This MRI machine belongs to the people of Namibia. It must remain functional, well-maintained, accessible and guided by the clinical need. Patients must be treated with dignity, and the public must receive increased value from this investment. We must not countenance nor tolerate medical negligence across all our health facilities. A machine inaugurated today, but unable to function tomorrow does not constitute development. We must develop a culture of maintenance, accountability, efficiency and responsible stewardship of public assets.

**Director of Ceremonies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

22. As I conclude, today's inauguration is not about a machine alone. It is about a patient receiving a diagnosis timely. It is about a doctor making a better-informed decision. It is about a family receiving an answer. It is about reducing delays, guiding treatment and, ultimately, saving lives. Let this MRI machine stands as a symbol of Namibia's progress and as a demonstration of our commitment to a stronger, more equitable and more modern public health system.

I thank you.