

THE MWALIMU NYERERE FOUNDATION



OPENING SPEECH

BY

**DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM
THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MWALIMU NYERERE FOUNDATION**

**AT THE 39TH SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE AND
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION OF
TANZANIA**

27TH OCTOBER 2004
ROYAL PALM HOTEL
DAR ES SALAAM

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CHAIRMAN OF THE MWALIMU NYERERE FOUNDATION,
AT THE 39TH SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE AND AGM OF
THE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION OF TANZANIA,
HELD AT ROYAL PALM HOTEL, DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA,
OCTOBER 27, 2004**

**President, Medical Association of Tanzania; Dr. Kahamba;
President, The Association of Private Hospitals, Dr. Hashim;
Leaders and Representatives from Medical Associations
of Kenya and of Uganda;
Leaders of the Association of Private Hospitals in Tanzania;
Representatives of International Organizations;
Members of Tanzania Pharmaceutical Industry;
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

I wish to thank the President and Council members of the Medical Association of Tanzania for inviting me to be the Guest of Honour at this meeting, the 39th Scientific Conference and Annual General Meeting of the Medical Association of Tanzania, which is being held in collaboration with the Association of Private Hospitals in Tanzania and MEDICAFRICA.

I would like to acknowledge with particular appreciation the presence of your colleagues from Kenya and Uganda who I have been informed they are now regular members of these meetings and conferences. This is a healthy sign for the cooperation of East Africa that we all want to build and strengthen. I can only say: please keep up this spirit.

Let me also congratulate Medic-Africa, Medical Association of Tanzania, and the Association of Private Hospitals in Tanzania for organizing the International Medical Exhibition, which I have just visited. There is a wide range of state of the art modern equipment and pharmaceutical products that provide an insight into how the quality of health services can be improved.

I am grateful to the Medical Association for inviting me for the second time. I recall your kind invitation to me 20 years ago to be Guest of Honour at your Annual Conference in commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of your Association. I am delighted to note that twenty years later the Medical Association of Tanzania is not only still alive but indeed actively gaining in strength. I also note with satisfaction a number of members who were there then, but more significantly, I also note many new faces. This is very important for the existence and survival of any association.

This 39th Scientific Conference and the Annual General Meeting of the Medical Association of Tanzania will be addressing matters of major importance not only to you as health professionals but also to the people of this region as a whole. Indeed, it is an important undertaking to have major stakeholders such as yourselves devoting themselves to addressing a menacing pandemic such as HIV-AIDS as well as malaria, while at the same time looking into the health care systems and capacity enhancement in the delivery of health services.

I would like to pay tribute to the organisers of this gathering for the way you have made the connection between science and development as both of them cater to the needs of our people. I am confident that the operational manner you have articulated the scientific issues you intend to consult on and the broad-based representation of the participants at this fora will ensure a fruitful and meaningful exchange on an important development issue.

Mr. President,

Allow me to underscore the importance and relevance of some of the issues that you intend to discuss.

One of the major challenges facing developing countries such as those of our region is the provision of appropriate and affordable health care to all our people. Access to health care is a fundamental requirement that has to be integrated into any prioritization of our development needs and aspiration. Each sector of the economy and society has to be mobilized to play a role in guaranteeing the health of the people. In this case, financial institutions, including banks, insurance companies, social funds, as well as producers of health products, regulatory bodies, universities, clinics and hospitals – have to be fully deployed in achieving this basic objective. Creative approaches need to be devised to ensure accessible as well as sustainable health care delivery. It is in this regard, I would like to applaud and encourage the Public-Private partnership that is gradually evolving in our region.

For a long time the health care system was highly segmented with a severely strained public sector attempting to take up a larger portion of the load and the private sector being somehow inaccessible to a majority of the people. At the same time, an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust prevailed on the private sector leading to limited cooperation between the two sectors. However, we now have realised that it is important that the public & private sectors unite for the common goal of improving services to our people.

Your meeting today is a good testimony to the progress that has been made in forging this partnership. The presence in this room of representatives from public, private and the non-governmental sector underscore the shared responsibility that you all have, the common challenges facing you. It is high

time we consolidate and harness advantages from all sectors of our societies in improving the health of our people. The format of this forum is an important symbol and milestone.

Mr. President, your main theme of continuing medical education or as it is called, continuing professional development is a very crucial to the development of the medical profession. It is important that the medical experts and practitioners keep abreast not only with the developments in the medical profession, but also with the socio-economic and political changes taking place in their societies and in the world at large.

Mr. President, today many changes are taking place in the world. This is exemplified by the exhibition that is taking place under the auspices of MEDICAFRICA. If we are to improve our health care delivery then we must ensure that we keep pace with the technological advances. We cannot afford to be left behind. Professional bodies should take the lead. Indeed, there is no justification for a Doctor to continue practising based on what he or she had learnt in medical school 10 or 20 years ago. This is tantamount to denying our people the best of what is available. Continuing Professional Development is important and we must design ways to ensure that your members can have access to it.

Continuing Medical Education doesn't just mean keeping pace with ones own speciality interest. It has to be extended into wider aspects of continuing professional development, including computer literacy, ethics, appraisal, management, and evidence based medicine. It also means facing the challenges of inter professional collaboration and making teamwork a reality. Questions remain whether continuing medical education should be mandatory. The profession attention should remain focused on standards of medical care in a changing health service environment.

Mr President,
Distinguished Participants,

I wish to join you in reaffirming a strong commitment and determination to continue the war against HIV-AIDS as well as on malaria. You are in the frontline of in this war against a devastating pandemic. I would like to urge you to persevere and remain ever vigilant in this struggle which in the final analysis is one of life and death. I do not want to overwhelm you with the ghastly statistics on the effect of this Pandemic since you must be quite conversant with them. But let me just mention the distressing ones. It is estimated about 50 million Africans have been afflicted by HIV/AIDS. In Botswana 37% of the population is infected.

You very well know that HIV-AIDS is a pandemic that permeates every issue you intend to discuss at this conference. The health care system that we are all attempting to improve is severely strained by an endeavour to cope with the victims of the pandemic. Our training facilities are being undermined not only by the lack of resources that have to be directed to deal with the outcome of the pandemic, but the very products of these facilities are being robbed by this calamity.

Let us consolidate each of the fronts in this war. We should not relent on the advocacy campaigns on prevention, nor should we surrender on promoting care, love and attention to those who have fallen victim. Stigma and discrimination should be shunned and condemned vehemently. Universal provision and access to anti-retroviral drugs should be a goal that we should all strive for.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me before concluding make a very personal observation. In my diplomatic and political life over many years I have traversed many continents, visited more

than one hundred centuries and lived for many years in a number of countries - both highly developed, developing and least developed countries. I also happen to have a son who is now a surgeon. So I can claim to know something about doctors.

In all these places, I have been highly impressed not only by the facilities available but above all by the professionalism and eminence of some of the doctors I have interacted with – not necessarily as a patient!!

Let me say without any hesitation that in our country, Tanzania, we have some of the best doctors in the world. We have among our many doctors, professionals not only with knowledge and expertise but also endowed with dedication and commitment in the service of the patients. But I am also aware of the shortcomings and challenges that face our doctors. Some of these shortcomings have been just eloquently adumbrated by the President of the Tanzania Medical Association Dr. Kahamba. It is therefore my fervent hope that a combination of government and private sector efforts will continue to strive in the creation of the right environment which enables our doctors to perform their responsibilities in the most efficient, effective and rewarding environment. Such an environment includes provision of facilities and equipment befitting the requirements and challenges of this new millennium.

Mr. President,

Looking into your program I note that you have many issues to address, and in a relatively short time. Consequently, without taking any more of your valuable time, allow me to thank you once again for inviting me to officiate the opening of the 39th Annual General Meeting and Scientific conference. I wish you a very successful conference.

It is now my pleasure to declare the 39th Annual General meeting and Scientific Conference officially open.

I thank you