

## Speaking Notes: Deputy Minister of Health, Dr S Dhlomo

Department of Health, South Africa  
8<sup>th</sup> SA TB Conference  
ICC, Durban  
Opening Address: 4 June 2024

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The conference Co-Chairpersons: Prof Sisulu Moyo and Dr Lindiwe Mvusi

The MEC for Health in KZN: Ms Nomagugu Simelane

The executive Mayor of eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality: The Hon Kaunda

The Co-Chair of South African National AIDS Council, Ms Mapas eka Letsike

Conference Organisers under the leadership of the Foundation for Professional Development

All esteemed colleagues: Health managers, healthcare workers, TB researchers, Tertiary Institutions, Donors, development partners, civil society, and most importantly, people living with HIV and TB.

I am honoured to stand before you today at the opening session of the 8<sup>th</sup> South African TB Conference. Your enduring commitment improving the health of the people, but most importantly, of ending TB is truly commendable. This testament to the fact that working together, we continue to make significant strides toward this critical goal, of ending TB in 2030. However, as much as we have made commendable strides, we do sadly note that our journey looks like a mirage, where after reaching what you thought was a target, you realise another little huddle ahead. In the words of 1<sup>st</sup> President of our Rainbow Nation, President Nelson Mandela, that

. ***This*** illustrates the common knowledge that that life is a never-ending journey of challenges and growth, with each accomplishment or milestone only serving as a stepping stone to the next obstacle. This further means that we must never become complacent about the milestones we reach but seek to achieve even more. In this regard, we know that



TB treatment coverage increased to 77% by the end of 2022. The treatment success rate for new and relapse TB patients was 79% in 2021. However,

The story of the patient is again a reminder that the end part of the successful story of TB treatment is a result of the patient commitment to the course and the supportive health environment.

Despite our progress, significant challenges remain. One major issue is the inadequate testing for people living with TB, which hampers early diagnosis and



Partnerships with civil society, academia, and the private sector can harness diverse expertise and resources. Our robust engagement mechanism with TB stakeholders, through the TB Think Tank, is a testament to our commitment to collaborative efforts.

### **Accelerating Research and Innovation and Integrated Patient-Centred Care**

South Africa leads the world in the adoption of new tools to test and treat TB. The introduction of WHO-approved rapid diagnostic tests began as early as 2010, and we are eagerly anticipating targeted new generation sequencing. New and repurposed TB drugs have significantly improved cure rates for drug-resistant TB patients. The BPAL-L programme, launched in September 2023, now has over 2,000 patients on a six-month DR-TB regimen. Recent progress in TB vaccine development offers hope for eradication, and we are prepared to implement TB vaccines when they become available.

### **Bold Policies and Systems, and Tailored Interventions for the South African Context**

Prioritising high-burden populations and regions ensures that resources are directed where they are most needed. The national TB prevalence survey revealed high prevalence among men, young adults aged 15-24 years, and HIV-negative individuals. Poverty, inequality and undernutrition epidemic. The National TB Programme (NTP) must address the social determinants fuelling the TB epidemic.

Our first national survey on the people with TB cost found that more than half (56%) of people with TB face catastrophic costs. Pre-treatment unemployment among TB patients was 48%, increasing to 68% during treatment. Improved TB social and behavior

