

**BRIEF KEYNOTE REMARKS BY H.E. MAMA SALMA KIKWETE  
DURING THE FORUM OF AFRICAN FIRST LADIES/SPOUSES AGAINST  
CERVICAL, BREAST AND PROSTATE CANCER. 24<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2014,  
NEW YORK, USA.**

**Her Excellency Penehupifo Pohamba, First Lady of the  
Republic of Namibia and Chairperson of the Forum of African  
First Ladies Against Cervical, Breast and prostate Cancer,**

**Princess Nikky Onyeri, Founder, Princess Nikky Breast Cancer  
Foundation and Forum of African First Ladies/Spouses against  
Cervical, Breast & Prostate Cancer,**

**My beloved Sisters, Fellow First Ladies,**

**Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me to convey my heartfelt appreciations for inviting me to this important occasion which aims at highlighting the importance of education in the fight of reproductive health cancers. My sincere gratitude also goes to My Sister and friend Madam Penehupifo Pohamba for inviting me to this important gathering.

I would also like to thank Princess Nicky Onyeri and the team for the hard work that they have put in organizing this very successful meeting.

I feel greatly honored and privileged to stand before you to support this agenda which is very dear to me and timely to current challenges of the world we live in. Advancing educational opportunities and health services is an area which is very dear to me. For, I believe that education and health are the critical assets that can help break the circle of poverty and despair that many communities in the developing world find themselves in.

With an estimated population of 44 million people, which is 0.5 per cent of the world's population of 7.015 billion; Tanzania accounts for three to five per cent of the global maternal deaths with a Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) of 454 per 100,000 live births. This means that, in every 100 maternal deaths worldwide, about 3 - 5 are Tanzanians. Maternal death rates are closely linked with the high fertility rates and low socio-economic status of women, especially the lack of influence that women have over their own health care or over the daily household budget.

### *Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen*

Cervical cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths among women in Tanzania. The negative impact of cervical cancer is exacerbated in Tanzania given the high prevalence of HIV among women. Based on the current medical science, cervical cancer is easily preventable and treatable. Yet despite the ability to reduce mortality, Tanzania continues to lose thousands of lives to cervical cancer each year. There are many reasons for the higher cervical cancer incidence and mortality in Tanzania. These include: lack of awareness of cervical cancer among the population, health care providers and policy-makers; lack of epidemiological data; lack of resources including health infrastructure, human and financial resources. Moreover, there is little awareness of the burden of cervical cancer in general or the link between cervical cancer and HIV among stakeholders and civil society. Like many countries in Sub Saharan Africa, Tanzania is working hard to Eliminate New HIV infections among children, related deaths and stigma.

I created the Wanawake na Maendeleo (WAMA) Foundation which literally translated from the Kiswahili language means Women in Development, as a vehicle through which I would channel my contributions towards improving the status of women in my country.

Through WAMA Foundation, we have teamed up with the Medical Women Association of Tanzania (MEWATA), to hasten the decline of maternal mortality rate, cervical cancer disease, and improve the chances of survival. MEWATA is our key partner in the implementation of the Pink Ribbon Red Ribbon Initiative (PRRR) in Tanzania

In recognition of the importance of education and mobilization, I participated as a Guest of Honor during the launch of the PRRR program in Tanzania, through a mass screening campaign mobilization event that took place in Mwanza on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2014. It was a very successful event; women came from all corners of life, urban and rural, from formal and informal sectors, at the end of the three days screening campaign, we were able to screen over *Five Thousand* women for Cervical Cancer and over Two

Thousand Women for Breast Cancer. Many more women continue to visit service centers for screening and treatment for those who unfortunately were diagnosed with the cancer.

Our message was heeded in many places including Bahi District in Dodoma Region, where another mass screening campaign event was organized by the District Authority and their partners on 14<sup>th</sup> April, 2014. As the Guest of Honor, I made a call for local authorities and partners to make screening services available to women especially in remote areas. I also called upon women to come forward and screen periodically. About *Four Hundred and Fifty* (450) women were screened, I am told, screening and treatment services are going on in villages in Bahi District.

We mobilized resources to enable MEWATA conduct a mass screening campaign for cervical and breast cancer in Tabora Region. The event took place on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2014.

Having the President of the United Republic of Tanzania as the Guest of Honor was a great bonus and very helpful in ensuring that large masses turned up for occasion. We used the opportunity to gauge support from private sector players, Central

and Local Government Authorities leadership to participate and provide their support for the sustainability of the program. Over Seventy doctors (70) were available to conduct screening and treatment services in three districts in Tabora. During the two days campaign, the target was exceeded, *Five Thousand One Hundred* women were screened, the target was Five Thousand women.

In both Dodoma and Tabora we have been able to mobilize local resources to support the work that is being done through PRRR program in our country. We believe that if each of us plays their part, we can make cervical cancer a problem that our children read about in history books.

### *Ladies and Gentlemen*

We call on the interested partners organizations to support Tanzania to:

- Increase access to quality Maternal, neonatal and child Health Services by mobilizing human resource and making available key medical Equipment and Supplies.
- Support Advocacy for the Prevention of Mother-To Child Transmission of HIV.

- Advocacy to increase access to cervical cancer screening and immunization services as well as mobilization of screening equipment and supply.
- Advocacy to Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and prevention of HIV infections.

I believe, no dream is too high if we work together.

**Thank you for your kind attention**