

**GPC Statement**

**Ministry of Health and Social Services**

**Namibia**

**18 November 2020**

Thank you chair for giving me the floor to make few remarks, a presentation on Namibia actions for HIV Prevention: 2021-2025

Allow me to take this opportunity to thank UN partners (UNAIDS and UNFPA) and other partners for the unwavering support provided to countries with highest HIV burden, including Namibia. We are cognizant of UNAIDS investments by means of resources, technical support and commitment to ensure sustained political commitment through focus and driven target achievement that translate into strengthened HIV prevention response. So, UNAIDS and UNFPA your support is highly appreciated.

Equally, Chair, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to other international organizations, civil societies and private sector organizations that continue supporting the

Government of the Republic of Namibia towards the attainment of HIV epidemic control, which is in sight. The ongoing annual meetings on the Global HIV Prevention Coalition has created a platform that provides opportunities for countries to discuss, analyse and review set target in determining how far we have come.

Evidently, Namibia continues to have high-level political commitment for HIV prevention translated by the current work done by the Namibian Government. Namibia has finalized the Combination Prevention Strategy, currently being unpacked, developed PrEP SOPs including training curriculum and Monitoring and Evaluation tools, strengthen Key Population Technical Working Groups to ensure inclusive coordination and prioritized interventions targeting Adolescent Girls and Young Women.

Strategies relating to systems strengthening like the Sustainability Framework, SDGs, Investment Case for HIV and the just reviewed National Strategic Framework pursued by the Namibian Government are all efforts to ensure a purpose driven strategy to bring HIV under epidemic threshold.

As per our National Strategic Framework, the following social enablers have been identified;

- Political commitment and advocacy,
- Laws,

- Legal policies and practices,
- Community engagement and mobilization,
- Stigma reduction,
- Use of mass media and local responses to change risk environment. In addition to these, engaging local policy decision makers is another enabler that has been recognised. There is political interest and momentum to address some of the root causes of existing challenges, including policy and regulator reforms.

That being said, the implementation of HIV prevention programs does not go without challenges that could have made our targets easily achievable. For example, the number of new adult HIV infection have declined with 30% and a 39% reduction in young women aged 15 to 24, which is below the target.

Under our challenging economic climate including COVID-19 pandemic, sustainability of most of the prevention pillars are difficult. While there might be a higher reliance on donor-supported initiative, time is fast approaching that we must wean ourselves slowly from this practice. This need patience, commitment and serious calculated steps that will culminate in a stronger political will and commitments. Other challenges are more Programmatic, Management, Policy, Legislation and Finance and we are hoping that some recommendations within the National Strategic Framework for mitigating challenges and program improvement will be implemented effectively.

Namibia has always been a committed stakeholder in the response to HIV. This is evidenced by among others, the involvement of the First Lady of the Republic of Namibia, who is the UNAIDS Special Advocate for Adolescent Girls and Young Women. Who through her work engages young people to discuss HIV Prevention, Care and Support issues, prevention of Gender Based Violence as well as economic empowerment programmes through the #BeFree movement, a multi-faceted youth-driven platform that also facilitates access to services.

I hope that sharing Namibia's experience encourages others to take even greater strides towards ending the epidemic by the year 2030. Namibia reaffirms her own commitment to ending AIDS by 2030. So that no one is left behind.

Once again, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to both the facilitators and participants of this event. I look forward to engaging on how we can share best practices as we tackle this dreadful disease.

I thank you