

Speech by Hon. Samuel J. Sitta (MP), Speaker of the National Assembly and Patron of CCBRT, to Launch the Strategy Plan for CCBRT Maternity Hospital – 2nd June 2009

Hon. Professor David Mwakyusa (MP), Minister of Health and Social Welfare;

Hon. Dr. Willbrod Slaa, (MP), Chairman of CCBRT's Board of Directors;

Mr. Erwin Telemans, Chief Executive Officer of CCBRT;

Distinguished Guests;

Invited Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Hon. Chairperson,

Every year, some 13,000 Tanzanian women die while giving birth or as a result of complications related to pregnancy. In her article titled "Why Africa falls so behind," Ms. Edna Adan Isamil, a human rights activist who also runs a maternal hospital in Hargetsa, Somaliland, recently wrote: *"The prevention of maternal and child mortality is the basic right of all women and must be made a priority in developing countries. The urgency of the situation warrants vastly heightened attention. Otherwise the pledges and statements of health as a human right will continue to be words printed on paper."*

Hon. Chairperson,

Today's event represents a turning point in the history of the Health Sector in Tanzania. As we are all aware, the Government and CCBRT are launching the Strategic Plan which will guide the establishment of a new hospital dedicated to maternal and newborn health care for the Dar es Salaam region. The new facility will be called **the Baobab Maternity Hospital**. It is envisaged that, over the years ahead, the hospital will save thousands of lives, reduce the spread of HIV and the occurrence of disabilities for mothers and their children.

Hon. Chairperson,

The launch of the Hospital Plan is a result of the contribution and support of a wide range of stakeholders. As Patron of CCBRT and on behalf of the leadership and management of CCBRT, I thank the Government through the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare for the support rendered in the preparation of this plan. In the same vein, I am grateful to the Regional Health Management Team and the Muhimbili National Hospital for their expertise and advice into this plan. I also thank our development partners for the generous support rendered to this initiative.

Hon. Chairperson, Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Chairman of the Board of Directors, and the Chief Executive Officer have given you an in-depth account on the preparations in making the strategy plan a reality. Let me comment briefly on:

- (1) The Health Sector and Millennium Development Goals;
- (2) Importance of Private Public Partnership in Health Sector;
- (3) Improvement of accessibility to health care;
- (4) Challenges facing the Health Sector.

The Health Sector and Millennium Development Goals:

Hon. Chairperson,

At the Millennium Summit held in the year 2000, world leaders committed themselves to fighting poverty by declaring the Millennium Development Goals tenable by 2015. Out of the eight goals, three relate to improvement of the health and especially of mother and children. The three goals are:

- (1) Goal number four – reduce child mortality;
- (2) Goal number five – improve maternal health;
- (3) Goal number six – combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases.

Hon. Chairperson,

As we all know, the attainment of MDGs is the sole responsibility of individual countries. Each of them is expected to chart out programmes and allocated sufficient resources to achieve those goals. The envisaged CCBRT Maternal Hospital seeks to supplement Government efforts to realize the three health-related Development Goals I have alluded to. Current statistics indicate that in 1999 out of thousand births, 147 children died before attaining the age of five. However, in 2008, the number of deaths decreased to 91 out of 1000 births. The situation is therefore improving, but more needs to be done.

Hon. Chairperson,

Addressing the 62nd World Health Assembly on 19th of May, 2009, the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon remarked: *“It is sad to see that six years to the countdown improving maternal health remains elusive and slowest moving of all MDGs.”* Our Government on its part is strongly committed to improving health care for mothers and children. It is steadfast in its efforts to meet the health-related targets of the Millennium Development Goals through MKUKUTA. By committing itself to the three health related Millennium Development Goals (4, 5, and 6), the Government has planned to reduce by two-thirds the under five mortality rate and to reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality rate by 2015.

Public Private Partnership in the Health Sector:

Hon. Chairperson,

We realize however that delivery of health services cannot be left to the Government alone. This is because of the high costs involved in quality health delivery. It is on this basis that CCBRT and the Government have entered into a public private partnership to establish Baobab Maternity Hospital. Government has generously provided seven hectares of land behind the current CCBRT Disability Hospital for the new Maternity Hospital. Moreover, I am informed that the Government will be paying for the majority of hospital staff salaries and providing additional financial support for vital equipment and supplies. On its part, CCBRT will be responsible for the construction, management and service delivery of Baobab Maternity Hospital. On behalf of all of us, we thank our Government for enabling the success of this initiative.

Improvement of Accessibility to Health Care:

Hon. Chairperson,

Once can't boast of quality medical services unless the majority of the people in a country have access to medical care. It is gratifying therefore to note that the new hospital will be accessible and affordable even to the poorest people in our country. For those of you are familiar with CCBRT will know that it has a distinctive pro-poor fee system. Currently, the under fives and the very poorest are treated for free. Those who are able to contribute to the cost of their treatment pay only what they can actually afford. The wealthier patients pay the full cost of treatment, thus subsidizing the cost of treatment for the poor. This system is also underpinned by welcome support from donors. We thank CCBRT for the affordability of its services as well as for its good reputation as a provider of high quality services.

Challenges:

Hon. Chairperson,

Over the years, a lot has been done to improve health services delivery in the country. However, much still needs to be done to build a healthy society capable of contributing meaningfully to economic growth. Therefore, the Health Sector will have to overcome the following challenges:

- (1) Gross shortage of health personnel;
- (2) Poor health infrastructure;
- (3) Inaccessibility of health services to the poor;
- (4) Under funding of the Health Sector.

Conclusion:

With regard to this occasion today, it is clear that establishing and sustaining the new maternity hospital needs the support and concerted efforts of all of us. CCBRT, as manager of this noble and essential project, needs support in order to turn Baobab Maternity Hospital into a reality. The estimated cost of construction and running the hospital in the first five years is 30 billion Tanzanian Shillings. Some of us who are associated with this undertaking know that CCBRT has impeccable credentials in management, transparency, and efficiency. Therefore, this project is in safe hands. The Government's confidence in CCBRT is underlined by its wish to make CCBRT Disability Hospital and Baobab Maternity Hospital a Regional Designated Hospital for Dar es Salaam.

Hon. Chairperson,

I therefore urge all of us Development and Corporate Partners to join hands with CCBRT and the Government in fulfilling this noble goal of establishing Baobab Maternity Hospital. Together, we can reduce maternal and newborn mortality in Tanzania.

Hon. Chairperson,

It is now my privilege and honour to declare the Strategy Plan for CCBRT Maternal Health Hospital officially launched.

I thank you all for your kind attention.