



**Remarks by Ambassador Joyce A. Barr
To The National Waste Management Policy Development Workshop
Okahandja Lodge, Okahandja
Wednesday, 6 December 2006 9:00 a.m.**

Hon. Dr. Richard Kamwi, Minister of Health;

Representative of the World Health Organization;

Regional Environmental Health Officers;

Inspection Control Nurses;

Health Inspectors;

Medical Doctors;

Representatives of Other Government Ministries

Members of the Media;

Director of Ceremonies;

Ladies and gentlemen.

I am pleased and privileged to be invited to address you this morning on the important issue of Health Care Waste Management. Safe disposal of medical waste protects health care workers, the environment and the community at large. I am pleased to support this gathering of experts and community leaders as you work to protect the health of the people of Namibia. Although this topic is of great importance to a wide spectrum of professionals -- including policy makers, environmentalists, local government authorities and health practitioners -- it also affects the general public – the patients and average people who enjoy Namibia’s natural beauty every day. Controlling medical waste is also a critical element of protecting the public from the HIV/AIDS disease.

I applaud the Ministry of Health and Social Services, for its diligent work, in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, to ensure proper management of health care waste. Based on research and pilot programs, the Ministry of Health and its implementing partner -- University Research Corporation (URC) -- have reached consensus that robust systems need to be implemented and continuously reinforced. This, in turn, will ensure that safe practices are observed, appropriate standards are achieved and the Ministry will be able to guarantee the safety of health-care workers and protect the health of the general population.

The Ministry of Health invited the U.S. Government to join in this initiative and we are pleased to have supported this work through the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). For the last 3 years, the Ministry has been working hand in hand with URC and other stakeholders to develop and maintain a safe waste disposal environment for all Namibians. This joint collaboration has already produced some very important results.

- Almost a 1,000 healthcare workers have been trained in safe injection and waste disposal practices.
- The Ministry and URC have developed Interim Waste Management Guidelines in 8 out of 13 regions.
- Under the pilot program, they have procured and distributed 43,000 disposal containers to ensure safe needle disposal in 10 regions.
- The team has identified a local manufacturer who can produce the containers, considerably decreasing the cost of procurement and helping to build local capacity and sustainability.

These accomplishments highlight the firm commitment of the Ministry to a National Waste Management Policy, which is the goal of this workshop. It is clear from the accomplishments to date that it will be built upon a solid foundation. We anticipate that,

under the able leadership of Minister Kamwi and his staff, a national policy will be completed soon and implemented vigorously throughout all health facilities in Namibia.

Again, I would like to thank you for inviting the U.S. Government to participate in this critical effort and allowing me the opportunity to congratulate you on your achievements and share in your vision for the future.