



## Ministry of Health

### **SPEECH BY DR. CLEOPA MAILU CABINET SECRETARY FOR HEALTH DURING THE WORLD BLOOD DONOR DAY CELEBRATION ON TUESDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2016 AT THE GREAT COURT, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI AT 9.00 A.M**

- Principal Secretary Ministry of Health, Dr. Nicholas Muraguri
- World Health Organization Country Representative
- PEPFAR Coordinator, Catherine Perry
- Development Partners representatives
- Distinguished Blood Donors
- Senior Government Officials
- Media representatives

#### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

Every year on 14 June, the African Region joins the global community to commemorate World Blood Donor Day. This year's theme "*Blood connects us all*" focuses on thanking blood donors and highlights the dimension of "sharing" and "connection" between blood donors and patients with the slogan "Share life, give blood", to draw attention to the roles that voluntary donation systems play in encouraging people to care for one another and promote community cohesion.

It gives me great pleasure to join you at the celebration of the World Blood Donor Day. This is the 13<sup>th</sup> year we are marking this event in Kenya, which was adopted by the ministers of health of the World Health Organization (WHO) member states during the World Health Assembly in 2005.

In the context of scaling up efforts towards Universal Health Coverage in the African Region, there is an increasing demand of quality-assured blood and blood products. Therefore, the choice of this year's theme is particularly important in Africa where the number of blood donations remains low to achieve timely and universal access to blood and blood products.

The demand for blood and blood products have increased over the last couple of years because of natural calamities, terrorist attacks, road traffic injuries, cancer and anemia among other diseases. This is taking place at a time when donor funding is diminishing. For us to succeed we must adopt innovative interventions and intensify partnerships.

In Kenya, 2 of every 3 units of blood are transfused to mothers and children. It's unfortunate that, Kenya has one of the highest maternal mortality rates worldwide at 488 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, with approximately 20 women dying every day from child birth related complications. The major cause of maternal mortality is bleeding before or after childbirth, miscarriage, induced abortions or other pregnancy related complications such as tubal pregnancy.

About 60% of blood in Kenya is used to transfuse children, because of severe anemia resulting from malaria, malnutrition, worm manifestation, sickle cell disease and women.

Globally, about 107 million units of blood donations are collected every year. Nearly 50% of these blood donations are collected in high-income countries, home to 15% of the world's population.

For the last 16 years, we have endeavored to deliver quality and safe blood to the people of Kenya. Our Constitution guarantees every Kenyan the right to the highest

attainable standard of health, including reproductive health, clean water, adequate nutrition and the right to emergency treatment.

Indeed, timely availability of blood is an important component in the efforts to save patients from unnecessary deaths. Blood transfusion saves lives and improves health, but many patients requiring transfusion do not have timely access to safe blood. The need for blood transfusion may arise at any time in both urban and rural areas. The unavailability of blood has led to deaths and many patients suffering from ill-health.

**Ladies and gentlemen,** blood is a national resource which many countries protect jealously, with strict control of imports or exports of blood related products, to ensure the safety of the nation's health. Sufficient and safe blood supply is therefore key to a strong health system of any country.

This country requires adequate blood stock to ensure health security and response to disasters or terrorist attacks as witnessed during the Westgate, Garissa and Huruma disasters. However, adequate and reliable supply of safe blood can only be assured by a stable base of regular, voluntary, unpaid blood donors, as the safest group of donors with the lowest prevalence of blood borne infections.

Kenya is endowed with many healthy people who can donate blood. Let us desist from watching patients die due to lack of blood. Let us impress the spirit of patriotism and develop a culture of regular blood donation as a process in life rather than an event.

Last year the Kenya National Blood Transfusion Service (KNBTS) collected a total of 155,000 units of blood representing 39% of our national blood requirement which, stands at 400,000 units. To meet the deficit we have adopted various strategies

including targeting the adult blood donors and scaling up donor education and communication. We are also encouraging walk-in blood donors to our facilities across the country as a measure of reducing the cost of collecting blood.

Currently we are serving over 500 transfusing public, private and faith based hospitals nationally with blood and blood products. We have also stepped up our haemovigilance capacity to guarantee safety from our end and at the facility level.

I am happy to report that a short text message platform dubbed *Text for life* that we launched in 2014 has progressively helped KNBTS to capture blood donor bio - data and boosted communication with blood donors. Today, we would like to recognize the contributions of 160,000 blood donors in the system. The system has enabled us to do business efficiently in acknowledging donors after donating, sending notifications for next donation dates and making recalls whenever rare blood group is urgently required.

Through the support of CDC Kenya, KNBTS has also acquired the e-progesa Blood Establishment Computerized System (BECS), a vein to vein system which has the capability of interfacing computer technologies with the automated blood screening equipment, to generate blood results in real time. This system is now in use in six regions namely Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu, Embu, Nakuru and Eldoret and will be rolled out to Machakos and Kisii Satellites and 12 other satellites.

We are also planning to integrate all the information management tools, monitoring and evaluation manual tools, Text for Life system and BECS to have a single blood donor data base. This will enable us to get timely and accurate reports and significantly reduce the cost of conducting business. I am happy to note that three of

our development partners namely University of Maryland, M-health Kenya and the Association of Public Health Laboratories are working with us.

The Ministry is also in the process of reviewing the KNBTS Policy to avail blood for Kenyans within the devolved structure of government. The Health Policy has a legal framework to make KNBTS a semi-autonomous government agency. This move will herald a new era in the government effort to attaining blood sufficiency, to improve the health indicators and guarantee Kenyans more secure treatment in the event of sickness.

Finally, **Ladies and Gentlemen**, as we build up to the commemoration World Blood Donor Day, I express my gratitude to each blood donor and blood donor clubs; PLEDGE 25, LIBLODA, DONCOM and COLISA for regular donation of blood. I would also like to appreciate the role of the planning committee for making this event a success and our development partners, WHO, PEPFAR, CDC, Kenya Red cross Society and M-Health-Kenya among others.

We honor you today and we urge you to continue donating blood to save Kenyans lives. I also appeal to the adult population in Kenya to stand up to be counted by becoming regular blood donors. *As you are now aware "Blood connects us all"*.

**Thank you and May God bless you all.**