**SPEAKING NOTES BY DEPUTY MINISTER OF HEALTH DR SIBONGINSENI DHLOMO ON HUMAN CAPITAL FORMATION AS A GUIDANCE OF HEALTH CARE PROVISION DURING EVENT IN CUBA– 20 OCTOBER 2022**

Greetings to the Minister of Health in Cuba

Minister of Health in Morroco - Yemen

Deputy Minister of Health in Cuba

All the dignitaries

All the Head of Departments

All the Professors from various Institutions

Delegates

Good Morning

Firstly, let me apologise for the Minister of Health who would have wanted to be here but due to other pressures in the Country could not manage to be here. I therefore want to apologise on his behalf.

I therefore get into the space of such a leader who would have done an excellent presentation here. I want to start by saying, my contribution be almost a case study about what Cuba has done for South Africa. This is going to be a preamble that will assist us when we discuss the transformation and reconfiguration of our medical training in Cuba for South Africans.

It is actually accepted that we must see health not as a cost but as an investment, the best example for that is Cuba. If you have health for all, you have therefore have hunger for none. You need to begin to know how to link this up because Economists in the World have not learnt anything from the COVID pandemic and all other leaders, then nothing else would come to assist us to say if you invest less and less in health when you are hit by pandemics like we had, the whole World will be devastated and its impact is huge whether rich of poor country, we all have not invested to the level where we should. We should probably be as we invest focus on primary health care and that is what Cuba has done.

Let me then summarize the case study about what actually has happened, before that, let me just say this. If you do not invest in Human Resource, by the way in our Country we have put up a strategy in Human Resource now and we trying to work hard to fulfil that. You will realise that you will have an unhappy workforce because those few who remain at work were not very happy. You also would have quite a lot of medico legal litigations because the very few that are there are working hard with the high number of volumes of patients and there will be mistakes and therefore, they will be litigated.

Thirdly, you have a client or a patient dissatisfaction if you do not have the good service that you have in the Country for your citizens. So, there are good reasons why you should invest more in issues of health. Let me then give a scenario of what happened in 1995, when President Fidel Castro met with President Nelson Mandela among other things was to say thank you very much for the support you gave us in the quitagana wars in South Africa and in around Angola.

We know that you brought soldiers to help us and you did not steal or take gold to Cuba but you took dead bodies of your soldiers and for that we are extremely grateful and thank it. Then President Fidel Castro asked, what more can we do to support your new democracy that you have started?

President Nelson Mandela said, we need doctors, we have doctors who prefer not to work in the rural areas so people in rural areas are left without doctors and health services.

President Fidel Castro responded by sending us doctors to South Africa but President Fidel Castro in return said we could then train you and help you to train more of your doctors in Cuba. That is how the stream has started, over the next 2 day here in Cuba, we are going to be talking about how to advance and strengthen this programme. It is safe to say for now we are extremely grateful because over 3000 medical trained South Africans have returned home from Cuba. And for your information, these are the young doctors who are working in the far-flung rural areas assisting poor communities that otherwise would not have had any support.

We are aspiring to have a Universal Health Coverage just like Cuba in our country and this is a call in the World for all countries. We are very confident that with this contribution that has come home from the South Africans that have trained in Cuba, we are likely to do that. In the meeting that we are going to have in the next 2 days, I am going to share with you certain issues that have come up from the discussions we have shared with our countries that want to get to know about our gains that we have made in Cuba.

I would like to end by saying, this is the opportunity for us in the country to learn as much as we can, this is an opportunity for us to see, how Cuba has actually improved on its very key health outcomes be maternal deaths, infant mortality, child mortality even including stunting in improving because investing in health is investing in poverty eradication and investing in elimination of hunger.

I thank you

In conclusion, our experience in South Africa since we started with Nelson Mandela/Fidel Castro Medical Collaboration programme in 1997, we have seen an increasing number of doctors in underserved and rural areas. Thus, these SA students when they return from Cuba, we would like them to go serve in these areas because this is what we have learned in Cuba Health Education.

Our process to achieve Universal Health Coverage through the National Health Insurance in SA is on the right track, and we have learnt from countries like Cuba that Primary Healthcare approach adopted, is the trajectory we should follow as well.

I thank you