

TAC welcomes the appointment of new Health Minister and Deputy Health Minister

By *moderator*

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The Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) welcomes the appointments of Ms Barbara Hogan as the Minister of Health and Dr Molefi Sefularo as the Deputy Minister of Health. We congratulate President Motlanthe for making these excellent appointments.

We are confident that Hogan has the ability to improve the South African health system. She has been one of the few Members of Parliament to speak out against AIDS denialism and to offer support to the TAC, even during the worst period of AIDS denialism by former President Thabo Mbeki and former Health Minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang. On 14 February 2003, she received the TAC memorandum to President Mbeki for a treatment plan. She was removed as Finance Portfolio Chairperson by Mbeki in part for her stand on HIV/AIDS. She has a reputation for being hard-working, competent and principled.

Hogan has a long record of struggle for human rights. Twenty-seven years ago, she was detained and tortured by the apartheid security Police. She was tried for treason as an ANC member and spent eight years in prison.

Dr Sefularo, during his tenure as MEC for Health of North West Province, supported ARV rollout and the implementation of the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) in the province.

There are tremendous challenges ahead for Hogan and Sefularo. The inequalities of the apartheid system, the HIV epidemic and the utterly disastrous reign of Tshabalala-Msimang have left the health system in a parlous state. Hogan's biggest challenges will be to meet the treatment and prevention targets of the HIV/AIDS National Strategic Plan, integrate TB and HIV treatment, develop a feasible human resources plan for health workers and undo the considerable legacy of AIDS denialism left by her predecessor. The TAC will do all that it can to assist her and the Department of Health to meet these challenges.

Over two million South Africans died of AIDS during the presidency of Thabo Mbeki. At least 300,000 deaths could have been avoided had the president merely met the most basic constitutional requirements. Instead Mbeki and his health minister pursued a policy of politically supported AIDS denialism and undermined the scientific governance of medicine. Many more people would have died had it not been for the campaign for treatment and the independence of our courts, which ultimately forced Mbeki and Tshabalala-Msimang to implement an HIV treatment plan. We believe that the period of politically supported AIDS denialism has ended with the appointment of the Minister of Health.

We congratulate Hogan and Sefularo and wish them the best. Aluta continua!

[Please follow this link to view a short video clip of TAC congratulating Barbara Hogan on her appointment as Health Minister outside of her Cape Town home on the evening of 25 September 2008.](#)

For more comment, contact Zackie Achmat via Gavin Silber on 083 777 9981

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