

# SAMA MEDIA STATEMENT



## SAMA MEDIA STATEMENT – BUDGET SPEECH 2024

Pretoria, 21 February 2024

The South African Medical Association (SAMA) notes that "Health is allocated a total of R848 billion over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF). These allocations include R11.6 billion to address the 2023 wage agreement, R27.3 billion for infrastructure, and R1.4 billion for the National Health Insurance (NHI) grant over the same period".

SAMA welcomes the move to honour the 2023 wage agreements and an allocation to improve the nation's infrastructure. In addition, SAMA is encouraged with the decision of an additional R57.6 billion allocation to pay for the salaries of teachers, nurses and doctors, among many other critical services. It is our hope that sufficient funding will be allocated towards addressing the shortage of doctors in hospitals, and addressing the plight faced by medical practitioners where salaries have been eroded by inflation over the years, leading to migration of doctors to other countries.

The R1.4 billion allocated for the national grant by Government for "...a range of system-strengthening activities, that are key enablers of an improved public health care system, that must be undertaken.", is noted by SAMA, however, it must be highlighted that this is just a drop in the ocean for the work that must still be done to strengthen healthcare systems and to make the country adequately ready for the implementation of an effective universal healthcare system in the country.

SAMA hopes that this amount will be prioritised to employing unemployed doctors and their resulting accruals, a shortfall SAMA has estimated to be in the region of R1.3 billion. For the country to be ready for the proposed NHI, more funding, amongst other things, needs to be primarily allocated to improve health infrastructure, increase employment of human capital, and improve security systems in public facilities. It does not augur well for the NHI implementation given that the provincial NHI grant has been reduced from R695 billion in the past year to R456 billion in the coming year. It is concerning that the National Treasury has included existing NHI provincial programmes among those that underspent in the past year, hence the reduction in budget implemented.

This solidifies SAMA's position that the country is not ready to implement the proposed NHI without addressing a number of critical systemic and infrastructure issues. Underspending and budget cuts on these programmes only further worsen implementation of the proposed NHI.

(ENDS)

### Notes to Editors

About SAMA: The South African Medical Association ("SAMA") was established in 1927 and became known as it is today through the unification of a variety of doctors' groups on 21 May 1998 that had represented a diversity of interests. SAMA is a non-statutory, professional association for public and private sector medical practitioners. SAMA is registered a non-profit company in terms of the

Companies Act. SAMA is a voluntary membership association, existing to serve the best interests and needs of its members in all healthcare-related matters.

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