# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 1493**

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 15)**

**Ms N N Chirwa (EFF) to ask the Minister of Health:**

Noting the exorbitant prices of baby formula and the lack of provision thereof in hospitals, what steps will he and/or his department take to ensure (a) affordable pricing of baby formula in the hospitals and (b) that hospitals and/or clinics do not run out of baby formula?

###### NW1652E

**REPLY:**

(a) The Department of Health actively promotes, protects and supports breastfeeding as a public health intervention to optimise child survival. This includes exclusive breastfeeding for a child’s first six month of life, followed by ongoing breastfeeding until at least two years of age together with introduction of good quality complementary household foods. The commitment is in line with the Tshwane Declaration which was adopted at the National Breastfeeding Consultative Meeting in August 2011.

In the years leading up to the Tshwane Declaration, the Department of Health provided free infant formula feed to infants whose mothers were HIV-infected. This policy and practice caused much confusion in communities and contributed to low exclusive breastfeeding rates in South Africa, which in turn contributed to high child mortality rates. One of the key Tshwane Declaration commitments was to stop providing free infant formula at public health facilities with limited exceptions for cases where breastfeeding is contraindicated.

(b) The Department has an RT-9 transversal contract in place which is managed by National Treasury. This contract includes all the necessary products or supplements that are currently required for use in people requiring specialised nutrition due to their disease conditions, and includes infant formula products. The products need to comply with the labelling, ingredient and other requirements as stipulated in the relevant regulations published in terms of the Foodstuffs, Cosmetic and Disinfectants Act, 1972 (Act 54 of 1972). Hospitals and clinics purchase the infant formula using the RT-9 transversal contract in accordance with their requirements. Where there are legitimate medical conditions as diagnosed by the medical practitioner, or when a mother is incapable for caring for her infant or young child, infant formula is provided for free by the hospital or clinic for up to 12 months.

END.