# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 3668**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 14 OCTOBER 2022**

**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 38)**

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

Following three months of morphine shortages and noting that Barrs is the only supplier of morphine for the public sector in the Republic, (a) what (i) measures have been taken to ensure the introduction of more stakeholders and suppliers of morphine and (ii) is his department doing to counter the crisis and (b) how will the specified interventions be sustainable in the future? **NW4489E**

**REPLY:**

It is the Department of Health’s policy to ensure equitable access to quality healthcare through availability of safe, effective and cost-effective medicines at the appropriate level of care. The National Department of Health manages contracts of approximately 1 200 essential medicine items. Contracts are awarded to suppliers following an open tender process in accordance with the Public Finance Management Act. Barrs was appointed to supply morphine powder as the company submitted the highest scoring compliant bid.

(a) (i) morphine is currently available in different formulations from various manufacturers, i.e. morphine tablets, morphine injection and morphine powder. Aside from morphine powder, there were no supply constraints related to the other formulations. The Department has recently been notified of the availability of an oral liquid formulation of morphine which will be placed on tender in the next cycle. Provinces and facilities are able to source this formulation from the identified supplier on a quotation basis.

(ii) At the time of the supply constraint, availability of morphine powder at public sector facilities was 76%. To make up for the shortfall, the National Department of Health (NDOH) sourced the morphine powder from alternative local suppliers using the quotation process. Other formulations of morphine were also available. There was thus no crisis in the public sector. The impact of the supply constraint with morphine powder was felt more keenly in the private sector.

(b) The NDoH will continue to monitor supplier performance and implement actions in mitigation as appropriate based on the root cause leading to the supply constraint.

END.