

Address by the Chairperson of the KZN Council on AIDS and Premier of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal Mr Senzo Mchunu on the occasion of a Dinner with the Business Fraternity in Durban

Pre-International AIDS Conference Dinner held at Greyville Conference Centre

28 January 2015

Programme Director
eThekweni Municipality Deputy Mayor Nomvuzo Shabalala
Co-Chairperson of Provincial Council on Aids, Prof Nceba Gqaleni
MEC for Health Dr Sbongiseni Dhlomo
Acting Director General of the Office of the Premier, Frikkie Brooks
President of Durban Chamber of Commerce, Zeph Ndlovu
Head of Local Office, International Aids Society Dr Memory Muturiki
Private Sector Reference Group AIDS 2016, Ms Tripo Mothobi
Provincial Civil Society Sector, P Mdletshe
SABCOHA Board of Governors
SABCOHA CEO and Secretariat
General Managers and Clinical Managers: Key industries in KZN present
Honourable Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

At the outset, I wish to welcome all of you to this important dinner. We are grateful that despite your busy schedule you have set aside time to be with us this evening.

I do recall that when I delivered the State of the Province Address at the beginning of this term of office on the 26th June 2014, I offered to work with business fraternity to create a better life for all.

I also singled out the fight against HIV and AIDS as one of most important programmes of this government.

So many things have happened since that address.

Firstly, as the province we have reached over 1 million mark of people on anti-retroviral treatment thus prolonging their lives.

Secondly, another significant development was the announcement that KwaZulu-Natal Province will host the 21st International AIDS Conference in 2016.

As the provincial government once again we want to express our appreciation to the South Africa Government led by His Excellency Mr J.G Zuma and the international community for once again showing confidence in our ability to host international conferences.

Over the years, we have worked hard to ensure that we portray this province as an important site for exchange of ideas, and finding solutions to problems of different parts of the globe.

We welcome the opportunity to host this conference which will be a gathering of scientists, policymakers and non-governmental organisations, health activists and community healthcare workers.

We dedicate this Conference to Nelson Mandela

We dedicate this International AIDS Conference to our beloved Tata Madiba. Inspired by his spirit and dedication, we want to state to the people of this country and the world that we are ready.

We promise to host the most successful ever HIV AIDS conference giving delegates the opportunity to shape efforts that will strengthen a global fight against this pandemic.

This is the most important conference given the fact that it coincide with the birthday of our beloved former President Nelson Mandela.

It is important to note that the Province of KwaZulu-Natal will always be linked with the story of Nelson Mandela.

We recall that in 2000 Madiba captured the attention of the world during the International AIDS Conference held at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli Convention Centre.

Mandela used his influence to unite more than 12 000 delegates who had been arguing with no hope of reaching consensus on a number of fronts.

He said never ending arguments were distracting attention "from the real life-and-death issues we are confronted with as a country, a region, a continent and a world".

He further noted: "That dispute must be put on the back burner, he said. Nobody was totally in the right or in the wrong."

Records show that during year 2000, South Africa was the worst affected country on the planet with an HIV prevalence rate among 15-49-year olds of 24.5% (more than 4 million) and it was rising very fast.

In 2001, a total of 4 634 AIDS cases were reported to hospitals in South Africa, an increase of 11, 0%. Approximately 82, 0% of the cases reported in South Africa were between the ages of 15 and 45 years. Of this total, 7,0% were children under the age of 5 years

We were regarded as the epicenter of the HIV. The Actuarial Society of South Africa (in 2003) reported the prevalence rate for the province at 15, 4% (males – 14,2% & females – 16,4%). The National HIV and

Syphilis Antenatal Sero-prevalence survey in South Africa (2004) estimated the prevalence at 40, 7%.

Fast-forward, in 2010 the World Health Organization released a report entitled "Towards Access to HIV/AIDS services.

According to the report, in sub-Saharan Africa, home to 12 million out of the 15.7 million women living with HIV globally, women accounted for approximately 60% of estimated HIV infections.

Ninety-one percent of all new infections among children in 2008 occurred in this region. The report states that the knowledge of HIV status remained inadequate.

According to 10 recent national population-based surveys in Sub-Saharan Africa, the median percentage of people living with HIV who know their HIV status is below 40%.

Some 54% of HIV-positive pregnant women in the region received antiretroviral drugs to prevent HIV transmission to their children in 2009, up from 45% in 2008.

Between 2008 and 2009, the estimated number of children in sub-Saharan Africa receiving antiretroviral therapy rose from 224 100 to 296 000. Total ART coverage among children in the region is about 26%.

Ladies and Gentlemen it is important to acknowledge that this province than a decade later; the province has turned the corner and runs the biggest treatment programme the world has seen.

The successes have been seen in the implementation of the prevention of mother to child transmission, which now stands at 1, 3 %; making the goal of an AIDS free generation by 2030 a reality.

Our data showed, in 2014, that new HIV infections have been reduced by about a third from 2004 and 2012

The major achievements include:

- Reduction in reported HIV and AIDS related deaths from 67 429 in 2008/09 to 54 337 in 2010/11;
- Initiation of HIV-positive patients with a CD4 count of 500 or less on antiretroviral treatment, as opposed to the previous CD4 count of 350 before January 2015, and 200 before that.

- All HIV-positive pregnant women will also receive lifelong treatment, regardless of their CD4 counts.
- Reduction of Mother to Child transmission from 22 % in 2008 to 1.3 % in 2014;
- TB treatment success rate in 2008 was at 73% and at 84% in 2013; and
- Improvement of life expectancy from 54 years to 60 years.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this would not have been possible without a decisive leadership of Nelson Mandela which he provided during the International AIDS Conference and throughout his term of office.

We stand up this evening to salute a man who strode with grace and elegance among the great statesmen of our time and commanded an exalted place for us people in the community of nations.

We respectfully bow our heads in honour of a leader and a champion for an AIDS Free Generation.

The 67 minutes dedicated to Tata Madaba during International Mandela Day is an indication that the whole world was been blessed with the life of Madiba, and our generation will count itself fortunate to have been part of the experience.

Madiba's life has been synonymous with the fight for human rights, justice, peace, reconciliation, equality and, most of all, selfless love, compassion and the triumph of human spirit despite all adversity.

We remain indebted and shall forever be grateful to Madiba for his unique and exemplary leadership.

The 21st International AIDS Conference provides an opportunity to tell the world about our success in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

Importantly, the conference provides a platform for all of us to strengthen our efforts in the fight against this scourge.

The presence of international delegates will enable us to learn best practices and enhance our strategies in order to make an impact at local levels.

As the province we want to emerge out of the conference with strategies that will ensure an improvement in the AIDS awareness campaigns as well as health promotion activities.

We are confident that the conference will help strengthen the campaign on treatment adherence as well as campaigns on testing and counseling for confirmed HIV patients.

Young people hold the key to the future but unfortunately, as they grow, they are increasingly exposed to reproductive health risks such as sexual transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies.

Undoubtedly, the conference will help create AIDS awareness amongst young people. We will use this conference to strengthen our campaign on behavioral change targeted at young people.

We want to express our appreciation as the provincial government to our partners who have worked with us over the years to turn around the situation.

I want to single out the Global Fund which has provided financial support for the programme which focuses on prevention and it is targeted at young women.

This programme has yielded positive results that are beyond our expectation. We are grateful that the Global Fund has pledged R440 million for this programme over three years starting in April this year. Our main target is young girls.

In addition, this province has benefited from the partnership involving the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Nike Foundation. This partnership involves a new initiative aimed at reducing new HIV infections among adolescent girls and young women in selected high HIV-burden countries.

This new initiative is called DREAMS, reflecting PEPFAR's vision that girls should be Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-Free, Mentored and Safe.

This initiative will be implemented at Mgungundlovu, Ethekewini and Mkhanyakude municipalities.

UNAIDS has also supported the province by seconding a senior official as a technical advisor who is attached to the Provincial Council on AIDS Secretariat.

BroadReach Health has also supported our programme by seconding 2 senior officials (M&E specialist to support the monitoring of HIV response and also Operation Sukuma Sakhe. They are also supporting the response by developing a IT system which will assist in the reporting at Local District and provincial AIDS council level.

We value the partnership with all various donor agencies and the private sector.

I want express my appreciation to Toyota South Africa who have formed a solid partnership with the KZN Government.

Toyota has provided cars that have assisted in grassroots mobilization of people against HIV and AIDS. The cars are being used in various War Rooms across the province through Sukuma Sakhe Campaign.

The Sukuma Sakhe campaign focuses on HIV and AIDS awareness, condom distribution, Medical Male Circumcision referral, HIV Counselling and Testing and family planning.

Equally, we are grateful to Eskom who have also entered to a partnership with the KZN Government to strengthen the massive HIV Counselling and Testing campaign.

On the 23rd September last year, the Deputy President of the country His Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa and Minister of Health Dr Aron Motsoaledi visited the province to launch the HCT campaign at Ingula Plant in Ladysmith.

The campaign is targeted at workers and surrounding communities and is being championed by KZN and the Free State province.

We will continue to work with big business through the South African Business Coalition on HIV and AIDS (SABCOHA).

HIV and AIDS pandemic poses a major threat to the stability of our economy. It is highly commendable for business to have responded positively to government's call for partnerships to join hands in combating the HIV and AIDS.

This is because absenteeism from the workplace as a result of illnesses emanating from HIV negatively affects production, which has a harmful effect on economic stability and growth.

It is important for the business community to be alive to the reality that the HIV and AIDS has caused millions of deaths and left millions of orphans who now depend on grants. This has placed a strain on the national and provincial fiscus as it becomes government's responsibility to take care of such orphans.

We are calling on the business sector to work with government to intensify the fight against social ills as it has been proven that it was one of the contributory factors towards the spread of HIV.

The business sector must also use the Social Responsibility programmes towards the strengthening of our health systems. This will ensure that it performs to the optimal thereby aiding our efforts aimed at providing quality healthcare.

Programme Director, the 21st International AIDS Conference presents a wonderful opportunity to unleash a new leadership that will champion the global fight against this pandemic.

The global agenda can only be influenced by dedicated leaders who lead from the front. The primary responsibility of such leaders is to make a positive impact in their communities. Importantly, what distinguishes these leaders from others is that they have a sense of urgency.

We anticipate ground-breaking decisions that will generate hope and optimism about the future fight against HIV and AIDS.

We wish Durban to be a world landmark for a decisive action and a global giant leap from the 20th conference held in Melbourne.

We want Durban to be remembered positively such as its role in the World Conference Against Racism, Non Aligned Movement Summit, the formation of the African Union, BRICS Summit, CORP 17 and many other international conferences.

Local Support Organizing Committee

We have therefore moved with speed as the provincial government to set up a Local Technical Task Team. This team forms part of the Local Support Organizing Committee which is working closely with the Local Secretariat of the International AIDS Society.

The society boasts more than 16 000 members and has done wonderful work over the years in unifying efforts of more HIV professionals in 170 countries. The society is the custodian of the AIDS Conference and it was a privilege for me to launch the local office of the conference secretariat last year in June.

At this stage I wish to introduce Dr Memory Muturuk, Head of the Local office of International AIDS Society. I invite the business sector to have more interactions with Dr Memory Muturuk and her office.

As the provincial government we are encouraging the business community to join hands with the organizing committee to ensure build up activities are inclusive and demonstrate the state of readiness.

Opportunities for Business (tourism and hospitality)

Whilst our focus will be on the discussions and deliberations, our message to the business community is that the conference provides an

opportunity to further promote KZN as a destination for leisure and investment.

We are calling upon the hospitality industry to ensure that our guests feel home away from home. There are opportunities for emerging entrepreneurs, especially those who provide Bed and Breakfast facilities.

We are encouraging stakeholders involved in the tourism sector to take advantage of the conference by offering tourism packages that will encourage delegates to remain in the province even after the conference.

We are developing a hosting programme which will ensure that we give visitors to this province a true KwaZulu-Natal warm experience like what we did during the FIFA 2010 World Cup and other major conferences.

We will encourage journalists and delegates to travel throughout the province and marvel the beauty of the motherland. Efforts will be made to ensure that they experience the friendly and warm smiles of the people of KwaZulu-Natal better known as the Rainbow Nation.

Working with eThekweni Municipality and law enforcement agencies we will beef up security to ensure the safety of our visitors.

I thank you

Issued by the Office of the Premier

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