

**Remarks and introduction of the Health Minister Dr Zweli Mkhize by
Provincial Chairperson of the KZN Council on AIDS and Premier of the
Province of KwaZulu-Natal Mr Sihle Zikalala**

OPENING OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN AIDS CONFERENCE

INKOSI ALBERT LUTHULI ICC, eTHEKWINI METRO, KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

11 JUNE 2019

HALL 1 AT 15H00 – 18H00

Programme Director,
Minister of Health – Dr Zweli Mkhize
Mayor of eThekweni Municipality
KZN Health MEC Nomagugu Simelane-Zulu and all other Health MECs from other
province
All Members of the Executive Council present
Members of parliament
Mayors and Councillors
Representatives of the South African National Aids Council
Representatives of all Aids councils from all provinces
All stakeholders in the Fight Against HIV, Aids and TB
Health workers
Members of society
Members of the media;
Ladies and gentlemen;

Good Evening

On behalf of KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government, we wish to express our appreciation to all the speakers for their comprehensive presentations.

We have been galvanized into action and to act with speed to ensure that we create an Aids Free Society in our province and the country.

But more importantly, the message that we want to convey to the national and international delegates is that the people of KwaZulu-Natal will remain united in the fight against HIV, Aids and TB.

It was in 2000 here at the ICC, during the International Aids Conference, when our former President Nelson Mandela used his influence unite more than 12 000 delegates. We recall that the delegates had been arguing with no hope of reaching consensus on a number of fronts.

Madiba warned against never ending arguments saying these were distracting attention "from the real life-and-death issues we are confronted with as a country, a region, a continent and a world".

Therefore, Ladies and Gentlemen, we are grateful that this afternoon we agree that we need to act to turn around the situation.

The statistics that have been presented together with strategies that we need to implement - have generated hope and optimism about the future fight against HIV and AIDS.

Programme Director, I wish to inform all delegates that plans are underway to ensure the sitting of the first meeting of the Provincial Council on Aids.

Our main focus include ensuring that the resolutions of this Aids Conference are implemented as a matter of urgency. We want all leaders of society to come together and form a Partnership to fight the scourge of TB, HIV and AIDS.

We want elected leaders from all political parties, in provincial and local government, traditional, religious leaders and those in civil society to understand the Human Rights Plan that was launched today.

In order to make an impact, our leaders need to be exposed to all presentations that have been made throughout this conference.

In addition, we will continue to use an integrated response in the form of Operation Sukuma Sakhe, a Flagship Programme run at Ward levels across all municipalities.

We thank all donor agencies that are here with us who have supported Operation Sukuma Sakhe and all our flagship programmes. We want to single out Global Fund, United Nations for Projects Offices, Stop TB Partnership, Academic institutions and many others who are too many to mention.

We are advocating for communities to create a ward based grassroots response involving all sectors of the community and acting together outside party political and partisan interests to save our people from this pandemic. This is what Nelson Mandela preached during his term of office as the President of the Republic of South Africa.

As the new provincial executive council we want to emphasize the importance of uniformity and visible leadership at all levels. The presentations today have showed very clearly that HIV, Aids and TB will continue to threaten the social fabric of our societies unless we come together and act urgently.

We want to appeal to churches and religious fraternity to work much closer with provincial government in helping our community to foster behavioural change to defeat social ills.

Amakhosi and traditional leaders have a pivotal role to play in the stabilization of our community. In this regard, as the provincial government we will work closely with the House of Traditional Leaders and individual Amakhosi to intensify the fight against HIV, Aids and TB.

Programme Director, at this stage, allow me to introduce – our Health Minister.

Dr Zweli Mkhize is a medical doctor, legislator and politician. He was born in Willowfontein, Pietermaritzburg.

He graduated from the University of Natal (now University of KwaZulu-Natal) in 1982. In 1983 he did his internship at McCords Hospital in Durban before being employed at Edendale Hospital in his hometown, Pietermaritzburg.

Dr Mkhize has played a pivotal role in the process leading towards the establishment of a democratic government.

In 1986 he went into exile and continued with his medical practice in Swaziland and Zimbabwe. He returned to South Africa in 1991 to work at Themba Hospital in the Eastern Transvaal. Later the same year he started his private practice in Pietermaritzburg.

Between 1991 and 1994 he served as a member of the ANC's National Health Secretariat, the structure that was tasked with the responsibility of developing the country's health policy. He co-founded the Regional Health Forum and became a member of the National Health Forum.

He served as MEC for Health in KwaZulu-Natal for ten years (1994 to 2004), making him the longest serving provincial health MEC in the country.

Dr Mkhize was behind the drafting of the National Health Insurance when he served as the Chair of the ANC Subcommittee on Health and Education.

Dr Zweli Mkhize was Chancellor of the University of KwaZulu-Natal from 2009 until 2017 and he was the Treasurer General of the ANC, having been elected at ANC's 53rd National Conference in December 2012.

He was appointed as the Minister of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs on the 27th February 2018. He is the Chancellor of Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University and our Minister of Health.

Let us welcome to the podium Dr Zweli Mkhize