



GAUTENG PROVINCE

HEALTH
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SPEECH

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE GAUTENG MEC FOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS IN GAUTENG, Ms. NOMANTU NKOMO-RALEHOKO ON BEHALF OF GAUTENG PREMIER, AT THE WORLD AIDS DAY COMMEMORATION, KHUTSONG STADIUM, CARLETONVILLE, MERAFAONG LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, WEST RAND

FRIDAY, 06 DECEMBER 2024

Programme Directors,
Premier of Gauteng in absentia;

Civil Society Chairperson, Ms Gladys Tshabalala and the broad civil society leadership;

Members of the Executive Council; Executive Mayors, Municipal Managers, MMCs for Health and Social Development, Heads of Departments; Interfaith leaders; Development Partners, and most importantly members of the community here today,

Dumelang, Molwedi, Sanbonani, Good afternoon to you all.

Today, we are gathered here not just to commemorate the World AIDS Day but to reaffirm our commitment to the fight against HIV, TB, and STIs. It is an honour to stand among passionate leaders, partners, and community members who share a vision of a Gauteng free of new infections and stigma.

For South Africa, the World AIDS Day commemoration is one of the apex events in our country's HIV response calendar.

Accordingly, today is a day of reflection, unity, and action. As we gather here to commemorate the 2024 World AIDS Day, we are reminded of the collective responsibility we bear in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

We are confronting a pandemic which potentially, is threatening the future of humanity. It is for this reason that failure is not an option in this existential struggle to save our future.



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According to the 2024 UNAIDS Report, HIV remains a public health challenge across the world with a total of 42.3 million people having died from AIDS-related illnesses since the start of the epidemic.

So, in this epic battle, countries, governments, medical health institutions and practitioners, civil society and indeed individuals, have a massive responsibility on their hands.

Programme Director;

This year marks 30 years of South Africa's democracy and 20 years of the ARV Comprehensive Care Management and Treatment Plan (CCMT) rollout in our country. Both of these are no ordinary landmarks.

Reflecting on the 30 years of Democracy in South Africa, the President of the Republic Cyril Ramaphosa reported that:

'The democratic state has, through its health care programmes, brought down child mortality, improved life expectancy and made important strides towards overcoming the HIV/Aids pandemic.'

Over these last decades we have been working within the framework of the Global AIDS Strategy to make available access and effective combination of prevention option to 95% of people identified as facing high risk of acquiring HIV.

While more still needs to be done, we are pleased with progressed made so far and remain confident that building on this momentum more still can be achieved in this epic struggle.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

For the year 2024, the World Aids Day Celebrations has adopted the theme: 'Equal rights, equal care'.

We are called to end all forms of inequalities that hinder access to HIV, TB & STI-related treatment, care, and support.

For its part, Gauteng Province has seen increased access to testing, treatment, and support services for individuals living with HIV and other key and priority populations.



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As such, the province has seen a steady increase in the number of people living with HIV (PLHIV) as the number of people dying from AIDS-related illnesses has also declined. Currently, there are 1.81 million people living with HIV.

In addition, Gauteng has done remarkably well in surpassing the first 95% target, as 96% of the people living with HIV have tested for HIV and know their status.

For the province to achieve the ambitious targets set in the Gauteng Provincial Implementation Plan (PIP) on HIV, TB & STIs (2023-2028), we need strengthened governance structures, that is, functional AIDS Councils at all levels, Provincial, District and local levels.

Executive Mayors and their Co-chairs from Civil Society need to lead by convening AIDS Councils quarterly as part of co-ordinating and monitoring the implementation of the HIV, TB & STI response.

To date, three (3) municipalities have already launched their AIDS Councils led by the Executive Mayors and the Civil Society Forum leadership.

Strong AIDS Councils lead to strengthened HIV, TB & STI partnership and collaboration efforts for improved service delivery to our communities.

I want to express my appreciation for the partnership between the government and civil society since Government cannot win the battle against the pandemic without the involvement of civil society.

The province has a vibrant and active civil society at the provincial and district levels aligned with the current term of the National Strategic Plan (NSP) on HIV, TB & STIs, 2023-2028. We are thankful for the energy this brings into our collective effort.

I am also pleased to report that there have also been great strides made in the reduction of new HIV infections. However, new HIV infections remain very high, and the pace of reduction is very slow. If we continue at the current pace, we will most likely not meet our National Strategic Plan or Gauteng Provincial Implementation Plan targets.

The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) survey findings show that social and structural drivers such as multiple and concurrent partnerships, low condom usage, high early sexual debut among young people and gender-based violence remain some of our challenges.

Quite clearly, we have the added responsibility to work for the change of social conditions in which communities live to help us bring the HIV challenge under control.

Therefore, we need strong collaboration and partnership between **all spheres of** Government, Civil society sectors, and the private sector.



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We have endorsed the Gauteng Provincial Implementation Plan (PIP) on HIV, TB & STIs (2023-2028), which is a roadmap towards addressing the challenges related to retention to care for HIV & TB clients as well as social and structural drivers identified in the HSRC survey 2022.

I am pleased to inform our communities that various activities and engagements have occurred in all municipalities as a build-up to this day (6th December 2024).

These activities include the Men's Parliament convened by municipalities and their AIDS Council stakeholders; the Teenage Pregnancy Seminar, which was led by the MEC of Health and Wellness and the youth sector; the subsequent rollout of the campaign in all municipalities; Cheka Impilo campaigns where non-communicable diseases, HIV, TB & STIs services are provided; roll out of the U=U campaign; and implementation of the Global Alliance Plan to End AIDS in Children by 2030 to address the gaps identified among children (under 15) and adolescents.

This programme of action must continue to take place daily so that the province can address the challenges it is currently experiencing.

In closing, let us continue to forge strong partnerships for improved access to HIV, TB & STI services, especially among the key and priority population within our TISH areas. We are grateful for your presence here today as we continue our collective efforts to create a world free from the burden of HIV and AIDS.

As I conclude, let me take this opportunity to thank the Gauteng AIDS Council. This structure has the very important responsibility as an advisory body to the Gauteng Provincial Government to ensure the rendering of the multisectoral response to HIV, TB and STIs.

We are faced with a serious challenge which demands of us the utmost in partnership and collaboration if we are to meet the 3rd Sustainable Development Goal, one of the 17 such goals adopted by world leaders in September 2015.

This is a goal focusing on 'Good Health and Well-Being', for which countries are called to ensure healthy lives and to promote well-being for all at all ages.'

Let us continue to pull out all the stops in our determination to strive for a HIV free generation. Working together as partners, we can do more to translate this dream into reality.

I thank you and wish all of us well as we prepare to take this fight into the year 2025.