

**Opening Remarks and Welcome Address
by Co-Chairperson of the KZN Council on AIDS and Premier of the Province of
KwaZulu-Natal Mr Willies Mchunu on the occasion of the Sitting of the Council
on Aids held at the Greys Hospital**

13 September 2017

Deputy Chairperson of Provincial Council on Aids, Mr P Mdletshe;
Members of the Executive Council;
Aids Council Members;
Director General of the Office of the Premier, Dr Nonhlanhla Mkhize;
Provincial Civil Society Sector;
Heads of Department and all categories of staff;
Honourable Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen;

I wish to welcome all of you to this meeting of the Provincial Council on Aids.

Appointment of the Director General

Today we have been joined by the newly appointed Director General of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal Dr Nonhlanhla Mkhize.

I want to take this opportunity and introduce her to the members of the council.

Perhaps, I will need to give you a brief of a background.

The Office of the Premier has operated without the Director General since 2014. We have had two acting DGs until her appointment.

The DG has been in office for almost two months and has been part of several meetings of the executive council as the Secretary of Cabinet.

Some of the meetings includes Lekgotla few weeks ago which deliberated on a number of issues including our strategic plans focusing on the fight against HIV and Aids.

Yesterday, the DG was formally introduced to all categories of staff in the Office of the Premier. And today, we want to welcome her officially as the member of the Aids Council. We hope that she will be a valuable asset in government and especially in executing the work of this council on Aids.

I want to state that as the leadership deployed to represent the aspirations of millions of our people, we have a responsibility to demonstrate commitment towards redressing imbalances in our society. We want to make a firm statement before this council that we are committed to ensure that women occupy the corridors of power in this province.

Dr Mkhize has colourful career having worked as a Director General in the Office of the Premier in Mpumalanga Province. She was the Director General for the Department of the Status of Women, Children and People with Disabilities.

She was also the Acting Deputy Director General for Policy and Governance in Office of the Premier in KwaZulu-Natal between 2009 March to October 2010.

Importantly, she was also the Chief Director for Human Rights in Office of the Premier in KwaZulu-Natal between 2005 June to February 2009. Before that she was the Director for Human Rights in Office of the Premier in KwaZulu-Natal.

Dr Mkhize is highly qualified and we believe that her experience will ensure that the Office of the Premier performs its task of being central in the monitoring and evaluation of the performance of the province.

There are numerous areas where the Office of the Premier should and can be more effective in promoting sound policy coordination and good governance in this province. The DG is expected to focus on these areas.

The first area of focus is the integration of services, skills and maximize the application of available resources and remove the silo mentality in government in order to make an impact.

Secondly, she will lead all programmes aimed at the conservation of resources and allocate and align budgets in accordance with priorities towards effective and efficient delivery of services.

We have said as government we need to do this through promoting strategic budgeting based on the priorities we identified in our Provincial Growth and Development Strategy and Plan.

In the area of HIV and Aids management, the DG will ensure an effective implementation of a new five-year National Strategic Plan (NSP) on HIV, Aids and STIs. We expect the DG to lead the Secretariat Team under the leadership of Dr Fikile Ndlovu to strengthen all campaigns aimed at driving down new HIV and TB infections.

When she worked in the Office of the Premier previously, she created partnerships with civil society in the area of the fight against human rights violations. She created a network of structures that were involved in advocacy work. We need to ensure that we re-connect with all structures to intensify the work of the Aids Council at provincial, district and local levels.

Reed Dance and cultural events to fight HIV and AIDS

We must strengthen all campaigns and mobilize all communities to deal with persistent high levels of new infections. We must continue to give a special focus to adolescent girls and young women who are disproportionately affected.

We pay tribute to His Majesty ISilo SamaBandla for his continuing use of cultural events such as the Reed Dance to promote abstinence and healthy living lifestyles amongst the youth in general.

During the good olden days, our forefathers used cultural practices to encourage good health and to prepare the youth to responsible adults. Therefore, as the Aids

Council we must continue to work with traditional leaders to promote responsible and healthy behaviours in our communities.

I wish to inform members of the Aids Council that few weeks ago, provincial and district houses of traditional leadership were elected. These new councils provide us with a platform to work together in the spirit of cooperative governance.

We need to link up with the councils and perhaps arrange workshops to orientate them on the work of the Aids Councils and define their roles in all programmes aimed at fighting HIV and Aids.

When government introduced legislation regarding the establishment of houses of traditional leadership, the basic aim was to have traditional leadership structures in all spheres of government.

We need to work with traditional leaders through Local Aids Councils and Sukuma Sakhe programmes to turn around the situation. Uniformity and visible leadership at all levels is needed urgently because HIV continues to threaten the social fabric of our societies.

Appointment of the new CEO of the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC)

Co-chair and all members of the council, at this stage, we also want to congratulate Dr Sandile Buthelezi who has been appointed as the new Chief Executive Officer of the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC). He commenced his duties on 1 September 2017.

Most members of the council have worked with Dr Sandile Buthelezi in various capacities over the past 15 years in the provincial government. He worked as a clinician in various hospitals in KwaZulu-Natal and the Free State province.

Here made an impact when he served as KwaZulu-Natal's provincial head of HIV, maternal child and communicable diseases programmes – working with former MEC for Health Dr Zweli Mkhize. Since 2014, Dr Buthelezi has been South Africa Country Director for ICAP at Columbia University, which is a division of the New York-based Mailman School of Public Health.

As the KZN Council on AIDS we welcome the appointment of Dr Buthelezi and we have confidence that with his experience he will ensure that as the country we achieve our objectives of creating an Aids Free Generation.

I thank you