

Draft speech

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

28 January 2015

Programme Director
Members of the Provincial Council on Aids
Business Chamber representatives present
Business Leaders
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 but one 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.

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.

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."

Ladies and Gentlemen, 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.

We are calling upon all stakeholders – representatives from health fraternity, non-governmental organizations, civil society, academics, religious leaders, traditional leaders, leaders of all political parties and the media to work with government.

We must pull out all the stops and ensure an incident-free conference. We must ensure that the 15 000 and 24 000 delegates expected to descend on KwaZulu-Natal Province are able to focus on finding long lasting solutions to this scourge.

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 with 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 Muturik, Head of the Local office of International Aids Society. I invite the business sector to have more interactions with the Dr Memory Muturik and his 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 known 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.

KZN to host a HIV and Aids Dialogue

Programme Director, with more than 1700 journalists expected to attend the conference, clearly the whole world will be focusing on KwaZulu-Natal. Our efforts against HIV and Aids will come under scrutiny.

It is for this reason that we are planning to host an HIV and Aids Dialogue. Such a Dialogue will be attended by members the provincial executive council, leaders of political parties, mayors, captains of industry, traditional leaders, traditional healers, NGOs, civil society and general members of the public.

The details of this dialogue will be made available to you through the Chambers and the media.

This dialogue will ensure that we all speak with one voice and that we identify weakness and strength in our fight against HIV and Aids for further discussion during the conference in July.

The 20th International Aids Conference in Melbourne resolved to bring to an end to HIV and AIDS by 2030.

As you all know, 2030 is a very important year in South Africa as it is the year in which all NDP goals and targets must have been met.

In order to make progress in bringing to an end HIV and Aids by 2030 we must strive to ensure that at least:

1. 90% of people know their status;
2. 90% of those that are HIV positive are on treatment;
3. 90% of those on treatment are virally suppressed.

We will therefore use the HIV and Aids Dialogue to examine the progress we have made in terms of establishing district and local aids councils and ward committees.

These are very crucial structures that ensures that the management of HIV and Aids programme and decision-making is brought closer to local communities where this pandemic is making a devastating impact.

We must evaluate how far we have gone in terms of developing effective mechanisms to engage communities as partners in the rollout of the programme against HIV, Aids and TB. Have we succeeded in establishing better links between health professionals involved in this programme, volunteers, leaders, local communities and the business sector?

We must discuss ways of improving aids awareness campaigns as well as health promotion activities. We must 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. We must strengthen the campaign on behavioral change targeted at young people. The business sector has an important role in this regard.

Govt calls for partnership with stakeholders

Programme Director, there are a number of partnerships that worth mentioning but I want to single out the Global Fund. The programme

which focuses on prevention and targeting young women is yielding positive results.

The partnership with PEPFAR is also very important especially in terms of strengthening Ward AIDS Committees and the work of district and local AIDS councils.

We value the partnership with various donor agencies which includes various UN Agencies working in this 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.

With an initiative such as the SABCOHA KZN Provincial Business Sector Strategy on HIV, Aids and Wellness, business has shown foresight in formulating specific strategies to fight this scourge. As government we are relying on the chamber to share this strategy with its members.

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.

Honoured Guests, 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.

As government we are eternally grateful to Toyota. The importance of this partnership can never be over-emphasized.

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.

Govt calls on Business to invest in research

Before I conclude my address, I want to draw your attention into the importance of investing in research as the business fraternity.

There are opportunity to invest in local and regional young researchers through International Aids Conference scholarship programme. The IAS provides the largest international HIV conference scholarship Programme which has supported many young researchers in many countries.

In October 2012 a seminal announcement was made regarding the breakthrough in research in which South African scientists uncovered a potential vaccine against the HI virus.

The whole world admired the country after an announcement that a team of local researchers at the Centre for the Aids Programme of Research in SA had discovered that the immune system of two women living with HIV were able to produce antibodies capable of neutralizing and killing 88% of the virus.

This was the most promising and exciting news since the discovery of the HI virus.

For a long time the HI virus has proved to be extremely elusive, as it has shown a tremendous ability to alter itself thereby making it extremely difficult to develop an effective vaccine against it. There is also evidence that South Africa in itself has different strains of the virus, which has also contributed to the difficulty in developing a vaccine.

We are proud that the South African government is a cofounder of this groundbreaking study. This would not have been possible without the involvement of the business sector.

It is also apt that this development came shortly after the official opening of the KwaZulu-Natal Research Institute for Tuberculosis and HIV (K-RITH), a groundbreaking collaboration between the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa (UKZN).

K-RITH's mission is to conduct outstanding basic science research on tuberculosis (TB) and HIV, translate the scientific findings into new tools to control TB and HIV, and expand the educational opportunities in the region.

As has been previously stated, there is a great need for synergy and partnership between government, civil society and the private sector specifically, especially in the area of the field of health, as in South Africa access to health is a fundamental human right.

I am certain that interactions such as this dinner will go a long way in enhancing and deepening the partnership between government and the private sector.

It is through our combined efforts that we will ensure that our goals of combating the devastation of HIV and Aids are realized.

I thank you