

MMC KEYNOTE ADDRESS – WORLD AIDS DAY

Date: 29/Nov/2013

Program Director

Distinguished Guests

Councillors

Officials from CoJ and Province

Ladies and gentlemen.

Dumeleng, Sanibonani , Molweni !!

Let me first acknowledge that His Excellency President Jacob Zuma announced major policy shifts in 2009 on the World AIDS Day.

These policy shifts demonstrated a renewed energy, commitment and stewardship of the current administration in tackling the scourge of HIV and AIDS and TB.

On the 1st of December in 2009 President Zuma said the following:

“ ... to meet the need for testing and treatment, we will work to ensure that all the health institutions in the country are ready to receive and assist patients and not just a few accredited ARV centres. Any citizen should be able to walk into any health centre and ask for counselling, testing and even treatment if needed.”

I deliberately chose these words to illustrate to us that this government has been consistent in its message on how to deal with the scourge of HIV/AIDS and that our President is indeed providing the necessary leadership to tackle this challenge.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is important to note that the integral part of the renewed commitment was the launch of the HIV Counselling and Testing (HCT) Campaign under the leadership of South African National Aids Council (SANAC) back in 2010.

It is for this reason that going forward; we should amplify the HCT Campaign revitalisation and the expansion of the Medical Male Circumcision Programme (MMC). Our theme for the WAD 2013 is **“Get wise, Get Tested, Get Circumcised.”**

This year as a city, we decided to commemorate WAD by acknowledging the caregivers from Home Based Care Organisations and Hospices that support the care of those affected and infected by HIV. These volunteers as partners in the fight against AIDS are complimenting the work done by among others our Jozi Ehlo mile volunteers.

Their selfless involvement with the affected and infected people of our city is invaluable. The care provided by these organisations reduces the burden on Primary Health care services rendered by the City and we highly appreciate their efforts. These volunteers give meaning to the expression “e zandla zeya gezana ”.

Ladies and gentlemen it probably people like the volunteers gathered here today that inspired

Mother Theresa to say: **“It is not how much we give but how much love we put into giving”.**

Programme Director, let me take this opportunity to remind the audience that we are into the 5th day of the 16th Days of Activism Campaign.

It is through this campaign that as a government together with NGOs, we strive to make people aware of the negative impact of violence on women and children, discrimination and to act against abuse and human rights violations.

Coming back to the subject of HIV/AIDS, allow me ladies and gentlemen to indicate that World Aids Day provides us the opportunity to promote medical male circumcision (MMC) which according to research reduces the risk of HIV infection in men by 60%.

Though MMC decreases the chances of getting sexually transmitted infections (STIs), cancer and HIV infection, which does not mean MMC is 100% effective in protecting people against HIV infection.

I want to repeat the message that I have been spreading about HIV/AIDS. **“Knowing your HIV status guides your choices regarding your health, if you're negative, you can stay negative by delaying sexual debut, abstaining from sex or, if you're already sexually active, by sticking to one partner and always using a condom. If you're HIV positive – and sexually active – you must still always use a condom to protect your partner from infection, and yourself from repeat infections. You can take measures to boost your immune system, like healthy eating and exercise, and early treatment for secondary infections”.**

I will keep on reiterating these facts about HIV/AIDS so that the work of our beloved volunteers becomes easier.

Indeed our City welcomes the inter-governmental collaboration and private partnership and we are convinced that together we can do more.

For instance, on Sunday 01/December/2013 the City of Johannesburg will commemorate WAD by offering HIV/AIDS education and screening services to the Faith based Organisations.

We recognise and celebrate WAD in order for us to recommit ourselves to the campaign of prevention and education regarding HIV/AIDS.

Let the theme for the 2013 World AIDS Day reverberate throughout our city and province. If we coordinate our efforts systematically, we indeed shall achieve more. I want to assure our people particularly those infected and affected by this disease that yes, with correct treatment, it is possible to manage the debilitating effects that are a consequence of this disease.

This government sincerely believes that prevention is better than cure. In order for us to grow our economy and create more jobs, we need to have a healthy population and a healthy population will result in sustainable economic growth.

Therefore ladies and gentlemen, more money will be diverted to other projects which will make our people to experience the pursuit of happiness unhindered.

In so doing ladies and gentlemen, we will increase the life span of our people.

Let us borrow the wise words from an Arabian proverb which states that “he who has health has hope. And he, who has hope, has everything”.

Indeed ladies and gentlemen, our people need hope, they need hope to soldier on knowing that we sincerely care for their plight and of course, we doing something about that.

Let me leave you with a quote by the Delai Lama of Tibet when he said: **“Our prime purpose in this life is to help others. And if we can’t help them, at least don’t hurt them”.**

THANK YOU