



PRESS STATEMENT

African AIDS Champions accelerate efforts to achieve a generation free from HIV in Africa

Champions for an HIV Free-Generation find new ways of mobilizing Africa's leadership on AIDS

ADDIS ABABA, 26 May 2013—The Champions for an HIV free Generation, first launched in 2008 by His Excellency Festus Mogae, former president of the Republic of Botswana, have pledged to ramp up efforts to stop new HIV infections in children, end stigma and discrimination and expand effective HIV prevention and treatment programmes across Africa.

“We urge African leaders to continue to amplify their voices and be heard even more clearly now that we can see the possibility of an HIV free generation,” said His Excellency Festus Mogae, Chairperson of the Champions for an HIV Free Generation. “Complacency is beginning to set in, yet we are not yet out of the woods.”

The Champions, a group of former African presidents and other well-known African personalities, use their influence and experience to urge governments and partners to take greater action in scaling up evidence informed HIV programmes which have shown to be particularly effective in responding to HIV. Programmes include expanding access to antiretroviral therapy for pregnant women living with HIV which can reduce the risk of transmission to their children to below 5% and voluntary medical male circumcision which is up to 60% effective in reducing sexual transmission of HIV for men.

“The Champions for an HIV-Free Generation represent a priceless leadership initiative that inspires confidence towards the end of AIDS,” said Michel Sidibé, UNAIDS Executive Director. “I salute these eminent leaders who leverage their experience and networks to amplify the continental aspirations for a better Africa – as encapsulated in the African Union Road Map on Shared Responsibility and Global Solidarity for AIDS TB and Malaria.”

Whilst the Champions will continue to focus on HIV prevention and treatment they will also now look at a more strategic means of engaging with leaders across Africa. A new model will complement the successful multi-Champion country visits with a menu of other interventions such as single Champion country visits, one to one engagement with current African Presidents, strategic use of social and mass media and an expansion of the initiative to West Africa, with new West African Champions joining the initiative.

The African continent remains the region hardest hit by the HIV epidemic. One in every 20 Africans in the region is living with HIV. The Champions will accentuate efforts to ensure that the response to HIV in Africa is at the top of health and development agendas and that achieving a generation free from HIV becomes a viable reality.

Members of the Champions include Dr Kenneth D. Kaunda (first president of the Republic of Zambia); Joaquim A. Chissano, (former president of the Republic of Mozambique); Benjamin William Mkapa (former president of the United Republic of Tanzania); Dr Speciosa Wandira (former Vice-President of Uganda); His Grace Desmond Tutu, (Archbishop Emeritus South Africa and Nobel Laureate); Justice Edwin Cameron (South Africa Supreme Court of Appeal

Judge); and Professor Miriam Were (former chairperson of the Kenya National AIDS Control Council).

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Champions

Champions for an HIV-Free Generation is a group of former African presidents and other influential personalities with an aim to mobilize high-level leadership in renewed and revitalized responses to HIV and AIDS in Sub Saharan Africa. The Champions transcend political partisanship to speak freely and independently about the issues that need to be discussed, both publically and behind the scenes.

UNAIDS

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. UNAIDS unites the efforts of 11 UN organizations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank—and works closely with global and national partners to maximize results for the AIDS response. Learn more at unaids.org and connect with us on Facebook and Twitter.