

Speech

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World AIDS Day celebrations in Choma

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**Speech by
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Minister Mulyata, Minister of Southern Province

Mr Darius Hakayobe , Permanent Secretary of Southern Province

Mr Mungoni S Simulilika, District Administrative Officer

Dr. Ben Chirwa, NAC Director General

Mr Mwape Clement Walumba, *PATF Chairperson*

Mr. Chuma, the UN Resident Coordinator

Mr. Nishimoto, the UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director of the UNDP Bureau for Development Policy

Mr Elhadj Amadou Sy, UNDP Director on HIV

Ms Moonga, *Provincial HIV/AIDS Coordination Advisor*

Mr Clement N Moonga, *United Nation Volunteer/District HIV/AIDS Coordination Advisor*

Mr Boyd Mwangelwa, *DATF Chairperson*

Distinguished Guests,

Colleagues and friends.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am deeply honoured to be here to share this important day – the 19th World AIDS Day – with you.

I want to start by thanking the Government of Zambia, the Southern Province and the District Administration for helping to organize this march today. I also want to acknowledge the strong relationship the UN has developed with the Government at central, provincial and district level and its strong commitment to Universal Access for AIDS prevention and treatment services. Thanks also to Chief Singani for his commitment and leadership in his chieftdom.

I extend sincere congratulations to MRDI Mboole on winning the Red Ribbon Award and for being here today to share their experiences!

Finally I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our cosponsors from UNDP, Mr Nishimoto, Mr Chuma, and As Sy for their inspiring leadership and for their tremendous and admirable work on the response to AIDS in this country.

This year is a highly symbolic year in the history of AIDS. It marks twenty-five years since the first AIDS cases were reported in June 1981. But still the number of people living with HIV continues to grow, as do the number of deaths due to AIDS. There are now 39.5 million

people living with HIV. A staggering 4.3 million adults and children were infected in this year alone .

World AIDS Day first began in 1988 and we hold them so that we can all call for the compassion and support that is needed to stop this epidemic and to lessen its impact. It is observed to draw media and public attention to an epidemic that has affected people and communities in every part of the world. Truly, this is a disease that knows no boundaries, whether of income, religion, gender or nationality.

Because AIDS has touched all of the world's people, World AIDS Day has grown into one of the most widely observed international days. In virtually every country, community organizations, NGOs and government officials are today jointly observing World AIDS Day in the spirit of partnership to fight AIDS.

Because of heroic efforts by people worldwide, including the many organizations represented here, we have finally arrived at a point of great hope and great opportunity in efforts against AIDS.

For the first time ever, we can see strong political commitment and leadership . In fact, in 40 countries Presidents and Prime Ministers personally lead the national AIDS response.

And the money needed to begin to turn back this epidemic is starting to be available.

And because of better access to HIV treatment, we have all helped to increase the spirit of hope, with thousands and thousands of people returning to normal, productive, fulfilling lives.

Friends, in all this progress, the work of community organizations and activists – like the many wonderful ones here in Choma – has been of supreme importance. The community has acted as the conscience of the global AIDS movement, reminding the politicians, the bureaucrats and scientists of our responsibilities and of the lives that are at stake

The theme of World AIDS Day this year is accountability. And that is where the community has a huge role to play – to ensure that the money that has been mobilized for the AIDS response are invested only in the programmes that save people's lives and that the first call on all resources is given to the most vulnerable, excluded and at risk individuals and communities – and to the tens of millions of people living with HIV.

AIDS remains a top political priority at global and national levels, year in and year out.

At the same time, communities have played a massive role in supporting and keeping their members alive, usually with too little money or support. . In noting the role of community organizations, I would particularly like to highlight the support that women have provided. They continue to provide the backbone of our support and should be particularly thanked today.

Your achievements here in Choma are extraordinary and have inspired me, and I look forward to hearing my dear colleague and friend Mr. Nishimoto talk about this.

Friends, I will end with the hope that on this World AIDS Day, all of us who are working to end this epidemic will decide to put communities first in our work, to make financial and human support for young people and for women a priority, and, most important, to give first place to compassion for each other. We must unite with the goal of saving lives.

Thank you very much.