



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

ADDRESS BY

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MINISTER OF URBAN AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

2019 WORLD AIDS DAY COMMEMORATION

GOVERNMENT OFFICE PARK AUDITORIUM,

WINDHOEK

05 DECEMBER 2019

Global theme: **“Communities make the difference”**

Director of Ceremonies

The Executive Director, Management and staff of the Ministry

Representatives from Ministry of Health and Social Services

Members of the Tulonga Cultural group

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Members of the media

We are here to show our solidarity with the rest of our fellow women and men in the country and the world at large in observing the World AIDS Day, which is commemorated on the 1st of December every year.

Director of proceedings

Ladies and gentlemen

Since 1988, World AIDS Day has provided an opportunity for people across the globe to unite in the fight against the HIV-AIDS epidemic, to stand in solidarity with the 78 million people who have become infected with HIV and to remember the 35 million who have died from AIDS-related illnesses since the first cases of HIV were reported. Underscoring the significance of the day, Thomas Netter, then Public Information Officer of the World Health Organisation (WHO) stated in 1990 that:

The Day is intended to open channels of communication, strengthen the exchange of information and experience, and forge a spirit of social tolerance. Each year, it is the only international day of coordinated action against this disease around the world. World AIDS Day highlights AIDS prevention and control activities already under way and forges new links in the struggle.¹

HIV/AIDS imposes enormous economic, social, health, and human costs on countries. The response to HIV/AIDS has led to long-term fiscal commitments that compete against a myriad of alternative developmental uses.

¹ Netter T., 1990, World Aids Day, in *World Health*, pp 27 – 29, at p 27.

Director of proceedings

Ladies and gentlemen

This devastating virus has reminded us of our common humanity and our common vulnerability. It has also awakened us to our collective strength and shared future. We know that HIV infects and affects indiscriminately, and it thrives on ignorance, it thrives in conditions of poverty, it thrives on stigma, and in situations of unequal gender relations. It also thrives on reckless behaviour, the abuse of alcohol and drugs, and unsafe sex. It is, therefore, up to all of us, collectively and as individuals, to take responsibility for our own health and that of others.

And we do so, we must recognise that the battle is still on and we need to do more. The fight against the AIDS pandemic requires collective action and the contribution of each and every one of us.

Director of proceedings

Ladies and gentlemen

HIV and AIDS is one of the complex challenges we face as a country due to the following:

- Although HIV has become very common, it is still surrounded by silence, as quite often people are afraid to speak about being infected and other see it as a scandal when it happens to them or to their families.
- People living with HIV are exposed to daily prejudice, rejection and discrimination born out of ignorance and fear.
- The burden of care falls on the families and children of those who are ill, and who often have already lost a breadwinner and the meagre resources they have left are not enough to provide care for the ill person and food for the family.
- People still feel that HIV and AIDS is something that happens to others and not to their families; and although testing and counselling core

service is available, some people are not utilizing such services, even such services are provided free at Government health facilities across the country.

Ladies and gentlemen

Our fight against HIV will be more effective if it is fought on various fronts, namely to deal with aspects that fuel the spread of epidemic as well as violence against women and children.

Let us, change our mind-set and show care and compassionate to those who have been infected to say NO to violence against women and children.

We can break the chain of transmission through a combination of strategies:

- Empowerment of women and young girls and an active engagement of men and boys will break the chain of transmission.
- A change of the social attitudes that make women vulnerable and at risk or unsafe sex, abuse and rape.
- Setting up effective Workplace Wellness Programmes, consisting of information dissemination, education and voluntary counselling and Testing (VCT).

Director of proceedings

Ladies and gentlemen

In conclusion, I wish to thank the Executive Director and the Wellness Team for organising this event and everyone in attendance for your commitment to the fight against the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

I thank you.