

**CLOSING REMARKS BY THE MEC FOR HEALTH
DR SBONGISENI DLOMO
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU NATAL
DR ZWELI MKHIZE
EVENT: PARTNERSHIP FOR HIV/AIDS CONFERENCE
VENUE: OLYMPIA HALL, ROYAL SHOWGROUNDS
DATE: 08 OCTOBER 2009**

Programme Director
Members of the Provincial Executive Present;
Members of Parliament;
Mayors;
Religious Leaders;
Members of the media present

Good Day

First and foremost, I wish to express my appreciation you all. It is indeed a privilege for me to do the closing remarks after what has been the most successful conference ever in this province.

As the provincial government we relish this opportunity as it has enabled us to launch a joint assault against HIV/AIDS which is now twinning up with TB.

As the Premier pointed out in his opening address, the principal focus of the new government has been improving the capacity of the state machinery in order to provide quality healthcare.

However any attempt on the part of government which does not involve the broader society will fail.

Over the years this government has formulated a number of legislations to encourage partnerships among national, provincial and local governments.

Today we have strengthened these partnerships and more importantly – there is an understanding that we are building a better life for all our people. This is extremely important because the health of the nation is measured by the extent to which government creates synergies. Building bridges over our divisions and creating a permanent and unified front will help this province prosper.

I believe that today's gathering facilitated constructive discussion about how each party can help the other.

Master of Ceremonies, since the inauguration of the new government, members of the Provincial Executive Council have met with religious leaders, traditional leaders and the civil society in general.

We have committed this government to work towards the creation of an environment of an open debate and healthy engagement. We believe that through this approach we will be able to improve service delivery.

We are doing this because we understand clearly that a democratic government represents the collective will of the nation. It has the mandate from the electorate to articulate short and long-term objectives of the country with regards to socio-economic development.

A legitimate government that has been elected through democratic processes is expected at all times to ensure a coordinated and coherent effort of many actors - working towards the achievements of these objectives for the benefit of the electorate.

The presence of the members of the Provincial Executives Council, MPLs, Mayors and other elected representatives today is very important because we all represent the will of the people.

We have the responsibility to protect the most vulnerable members of our society using the Constitution as the guide. The Constitution is the foundation of the laws and policies of the country.

It protects the fundamental rights of all South Africans. It sets out principles, such as fairness and human dignity, upon which the country is run.

On people's health rights, the constitution says:

- Everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well being;
- Everyone has the right to have access to health care services, including reproductive health care; sufficient food and water; and social security if they are unable to support themselves and their dependants;
- Every child has the right to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services;

We therefore convened this Provincial HIV/AIDS Partnership Conference to share ideas so that the rights that are enshrined in the Constitution are enjoyed by everyone.

We are aware of the challenge that we are facing as a result of the credit crunch and intensified recessionary consequences. This has taken a significant toll on the public healthcare sector – one consequence being a cut in expenditure.

The Public Health Sector, which provides services to a population of over 40 million, receives only 45% of the entire health expenditure in South Africa.

With a Gini Coefficient of 0.578 in 2008, our country has become one of the most unequal societies in the world

Crafting the provincial government budget for this year has been the most difficult task largely because the economic slowdown means less revenue for national government. Less revenue for national government means less revenue for other sub-national spending.

Health has however been identified by the national Ministers committee on Budget (MinComBud), national Cabinet and provincial government as a national and provincial priority respectively.

It is for these reasons that the Provincial Government is intensifying the Fight against HIV/AIDS and TB

We hosted the first meeting of the Provincial AIDS Council on the 12th August. There were presentations on the National Integrated Plans on Food Security and Programmes on Fighting Diseases.

We are gathered here today to engage openly and to share ideas on how to ensure uniformity and cooperation in respect of the implementation of these programmes that were unveiled in August.

The most important observation I have made is that we all agree that government's quest to improve health care delivery in the country will be in vain if we don't adopt an integrated approach.

Uniformity and visible leadership at all levels is needed urgently because HIV continues to threaten the social fabric of our societies. Epidemiological data show that the total number of those infected in Sub-Saharan Africa is 28 million.

Although there are hopeful signs that prevention measures, treatment, and care are beginning to slow its spread, Sub-Saharan Africa's HIV/AIDS pandemic is showing no sign of slowing down.

These challenges call for leaders to lead with a sense of purpose and be result oriented. Leaders must have a high level of competency and be able to mobilise communities for a behavioural change.

Master of ceremonies, since the advent of democracy, government has been implementing programmes in various communities with the aim of inculcating the culture of volunteerism.

Amongst us today there are men and women who are prepared to work tirelessly for our communities.

We are calling more people of KwaZulu-Natal to join government to mobilize our communities to occupy the frontline in the popular struggle to eradicate HIV/AIDS pandemic from our society.

I thank you for your attention – Together we can Do More.

Have a safe journey