

**STATEMENT BY MR NYAPANE KAYA HONOURABLE MINISTER OF  
HEALTH, LESOTHO, AT THE MEETING OF THE GLOBAL HIV  
PREVENTION COALITION**

**10 October 2017**

The Government of Lesotho would like to commend UNAIDS and UNFPA for convening this new coalition of political leaders, prevention programmers and civil society activists to galvanize efforts towards revitalizing HIV Prevention. We are encouraged by the fact that the Global Prevention Coalition initiative will focus on strengthening leadership, accountability and coordination in HIV prevention response. We believe this meeting is long overdue.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Permit me to share some of the results of our ongoing efforts: Lesotho has made remarkable progress in the AIDS response especially in the scale-up of antiretroviral therapy (ART), with a 120% increase in the number of people on treatment between 2010 and 2016. Lesotho was the first country to launch the **Test and Treat Strategy** in the region in 2016 - an innovative approach that led to rapid scale up of enrolments on antiretroviral treatment. Results from the recently released 2016 **Lesotho Population-Based HIV Impact Assessment**, (LEPHIA) showed viral load suppression among all adults living with HIV to be 67.6% (70.6 % among females and 63.4% among males). The national survey shows that Lesotho is making significant progress towards the 90-90-90 targets. Among adults living with HIV, 77% are aware of their status, 90% of those are on antiretroviral therapy and 88% of those on antiretroviral therapy are virally suppressed.

However, our progress in treatment is currently not matched with similar success in primary prevention. Despite the availability of effective HIV prevention tools and massive scale-up of treatment, we achieved only 5% decline in new HIV infections between 2010 and 2016. New HIV infections among adults have stagnated at about 21000 infections yearly. This is particularly concerning given the high rates of new HIV infections, especially among young women. The LEPHIA report confirmed this by revealing a HIV incidence of 1.47%. This is unacceptably high and that is why we are particularly supportive of the need to strengthen primary prevention alongside treatment.

The key finding from the recent national consultations was that HIV prevention programmes have not been consistently implemented and their scale is limited. The stakeholders were unanimous in the conclusion that HIV prevention should be reinvigorated, ensuring that high-quality combination prevention services are provided especially to young people. There is an urgent need to strengthen, scale up, innovate and systematically implement primary prevention programmes.

### **Ladies and gentlemen**

We have reviewed the Roadmap with a focus on the 10-point plan for accelerating HIV prevention and the Coalition accountability mechanism as spelled out in the document. We wish to express our commitment to joining the coalition and endorse the road map as the framework for the coalition.

We are optimistic that going forward HIV Prevention programmes that address structural and behavioural factors will be prioritized alongside the treatment programme to make a dent in reducing the number of new infections.

I also want to draw attention to the fact that the country has made significant progress on the 10-point plan for accelerating HIV prevention in several areas including policy alignment to international guidelines and the re-establishment of the **National AIDS Commission** to coordinate a multi-sectoral response and lead the HIV prevention.

Another good practice the Ministry of Health has initiated is social contracting with some civil society organizations to increase coverage of HIV prevention and treatment services. This is still on a limited scale and need to be strengthened and scaled up. We hope, therefore, this meeting shall provide more light and details on experiences on similar initiatives in other countries.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Lesotho is committed to implementing the 10 point agenda. I will personally champion HIV prevention. Some of the immediate to medium term actions towards implementing the 10 point agenda will be grounded in ongoing national processes to ensure sustainability. My Ministry in collaboration with the National AIDS Commission is planning to conduct a joint and participatory review of HIV and TB programmes. The process will include a strategic assessment of the HIV prevention programme to identify the critical policy, programmatic and structural gaps and barriers to increasing coverage and reducing HIV incidence.

The process will also contribute to developing a new **National Strategic Plan for HIV and AIDS** which will incorporate revised prevention targets that the country leadership is committed to. The national prevention strategy will include steps for rapid scale-up to meet coverage and output targets by districts.

As a country Lesotho is currently developing the second **National Strategic Development Plan** which provides us with yet another opportunity to keep HIV prevention high on the development agenda.

In addition, we are planning to organize a HIV prevention summit: a forum that will help us to fully articulate prevention issues and forge a way forward. As you may be aware the SADC region has since 2015 prioritised HIV prevention with Ministers taking the lead. Last week SADC member states' technical team led by NAC Directors met to draft the regional strategy on HIV Prevention with a focus on key populations to ensure no one is left behind. Countries were also guided on how to set inclusive prevention targets and indicators which will enable monitoring and evaluation of progress toward reaching the UNAIDS Fast Track targets by 2020. The strategy is scheduled for ministerial approval in November 2017 and provides for HIV Prevention financing commitment by member states. Programme Director we see today's launch as catalytic to the regional initiative. Following this launch Lesotho will prioritise the setting of national and subnational prevention targets aligned to the global and SADC prevention targets. The capacity of NAC will be strengthened to enable it provide the necessary programmatic and technical leadership on Combination.

We are fully aware of the urgent need to strengthen the country's role and leadership in coordinating and aligning development efforts in the country.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In conclusion the Government of Lesotho is fully committed to reaching the 2016 Political declaration prevention targets by 2020 and stands ready to support human rights issues in line with the sustainable development

agenda. However, reaching these targets will require concerted efforts from the government and civil society, donors and development partners and the private sector.

I would like to call on donors, development partners and the business community to intensify support for primary prevention, considering the need to scale up both treatment and prevention and place increased emphasis on HIV primary prevention targets. Indeed reaching the 2016 Political declaration targets will require increased investments and increasing financial support to civil society as our social partners. I therefore call on the donors and partners to sustain funding for HIV prevention across pillars allow for sufficient transition time to increase domestic financing, and provide fresh resources to fill gaps in neglected prevention components such as condom programming and key population programmes, and support community-led implementation and advocacy.

We are encouraged by this global initiative that we believe will provide fresh impetus to accelerating efforts to ending AIDS by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals.

THANK YOU ALL

**KHOTSO PULA NALA**