Global Prevention Coalition Ministerial Meeting Opening
11 November 2019
Remarks by Nyasha Phanisa Sithole on behalf of Adolescent Girls, Young Women and Women from 28 Global HIV Prevention Coalition Countries and Participants of the Adolescent Girls and Young Women Technical Meeting

Distinguished Delegates,
All protocols observed.
It is a great honour and privilege for me to deliver this brief presentation during this Ministerial Meeting on behalf of the diverse constituency of adolescent girls, young women and women. I would like to acknowledge the strong, powerful, fearless young women leaders and women who have led the HIV movement for decades, amongst them members of the ATHENA network, working tirelessly to ensure that AGYW have a voice and continue to lead the response. Viva to you ALL!!

In 2001 at the UNGA Assembly, the former and late UN SG Kofi Annan said “HIV has the face of a woman” and for decades even up to date it still has that face! The more the agenda is moved the more AGYW and Women remain left behind with rates of HIV acquisition amounting to 390000 and 75% of these from Sub-Saharan Africa (Envision for girls UNICEF Data hub).

WGW and WWW is a fast-track progress in delivering the Promise of ending HIV and AIDS and improved access to quality, comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights information and services!! And thank you to the Global Prevention Coalition for championing this cause and having Winny Byanyima as the new Executive Director of UNAIDS gives us hope of the dawn of a new era.

Distinguished delegates,
The HIV response for women and girls in our diversity must be rooted in an integrated approach to education, gender equity, poverty eradication and economic empowerment as these all are central to whether a woman or girl will have health literacy, ability to exercise choice, capacity to refuse unwanted sex, remove the need to exchange sex *unwanted* sex for money or goods, and challenge harmful cultural norms and practises including child marriages, female genital mutilation. HIV and adolescent girls and young women need to be well articulated in the UHC Agenda.

#WhatGirlsWant and #WhatWomenWant as commitments to the HIV prevention Agenda in ICPD is a renewed commitment towards:
• Advance safety, security, and freedom from violence, including ending stigma, discrimination, and sexual harassment, for young women and girls in all our diversity. There must be zero tolerance for any form of sexual harassment or bullying for all embedded into both organizational policy and culture.

• Ensure full access to information and education, including comprehensive sexuality education including provision of menstrual health and hygiene services, girls and women friendly quality, comprehensive healthcare services. Comprehensive sexuality education is an intervention that promotes self awareness: AGYW seek self reassurance in the wrong places that puts them in harms way.

• Support commitments that focus laws and policies that promote our access to sexual and reproductive health and rights without coercion, age restrictions or requirements to be accompanied by male guardians. In this day and age we cannot continue to tolerate the moralisation and criminalisation of our sexuality!! This has to come to an end!!

• Strengthened investment in championing our leadership and equity so that girls and young women in all our diversity are catalysts for and meaningful partners in positive change. We do not need more exposure we need more resources. The agenda is about us but resources are not for us and that needs to change. The retraction of donors in the HIV response is real but where is the mobilisation of domestic funding in this equation?

• A research agenda that is driven and led by girls and women taking account of the unique bio-medical and social context of women and girls lives. Inclusion and meaningful engagement in research will ensure services that embrace, respect, and respond to the priorities, life-long needs, choices, and rights of adolescent girls and women in our diversity.

We are commemorating ICPD+25, 2020 we will be Beijing+25, We are a few months into 2020 and the targets under the 2016 Political Declaration need to be met and in 2020 it will be 5 years into the SDGs. These watershed moments for sexual and reproductive health, human rights, and gender equality are vital to reflect on as we look to accelerating the Sustainable Development Goals and meeting vital targets set for the HIV response

In my language we say “rume rimwe harikombe churu” meaning that not one man can be able to deal with a situation single handedly, we need to all have a collective renewed commitment, energy, and passion towards HIV and SRHR of and for girls and women.

We thank you for listening to us.