



**MINISTER OF HEALTH'S STATEMENT**

**GLOBAL HIV PREVENTION COALITION**

*HIV Prevention 2020-2025, taking stock, planning the future*

**Date: 18 November, 2020**

**NOVEMBER, 2020**

**SALUTATIONS:**

**Chair Lizzie Nkosi, Minister of Health, Eswatini**

**Natalia Kanem, Executive Director, UNFPA**

**Peter Sands, Executive Director, The Global Fund**

**Raphaela Fini, Integral Health Municipality Committee LGBTI of São Paulo, Brazil**

**Fellow Ministers of Health,**

**Colleagues,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

On behalf of the *Zambian Delegation*, allow me to first of all express my sincere gratitude to the organisers of this meeting for giving me this opportunity to make this statement on behalf of Zambia.

**Chairperson,** The Government of the Republic of Zambia through the Ministry of Health has made significant progress in responding to the HIV and AIDS epidemic and continues to demonstrate high level political will in this fight. As a result, approximately 5 million people access HIV Counselling and Testing services annually and over 88% of people living with HIV, out of the estimated 1.2million, are on life-saving anti-retroviral therapy. In addition, our country has also made tremendous progress in scaling up viral load testing to now over 80% coverage from 33% in just three years and 95% national viral load suppression for those on ART. This will essentially translate into reduced HIV transmission from this population to the HIV uninfected individuals. It is also gratifying to note that Zambia is one of the few countries in the world that have achieved

the 90 90 90 targets - six (6) months before the end of 2020 with the country now standing at 95-95-95 as of September, 2020.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

Between 2010 and 2018 the rate of new HIV infections dropped by 13.7 percent demonstrating slight progress in HIV prevention programmes. Nonetheless, there are still about 48,000 new HIV infections annually (40% in adolescents and young people). To reduce these new HIV infections and eventually achieve zero new HIV infections, concerted effort, continued domestic investment and strong leadership will continuously be heightened.

The slow pace at which new HIV infections are declining can be attributed to low comprehensive knowledge on HIV particularly among those aged between 15-19 years which stands at 41% for males and 39% for females among other factors. As a Country we are ramping up HIV prevention interventions so that we markedly reduce the new HIV infections. Therefore, we remain strongly committed to the 10 - point action plan towards achieving epidemic control and ending AIDS by 2030.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

With regard to the 5 prevention pillars, Zambia has achieved commendable successes in the following:

**1.0 Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision:** the remarkable achievements noted in our VMMC program that has made us circumcise over 2.2 million (110%) males against the 2020 target of 1.9 Million males by 2020, has been possible through increased strategic partnerships with various community opinion leaders coupled with deployment of more providers in order to increase VMMC coverage. The Uptake continues to increase despite the COVID 19 pandemic.

**2.0 Antiretroviral drug based prevention strategies:** PrEP as a prevention strategy is now well established in Zambia with all the necessary guidelines and standard operating procedures in place. By end of September 2020, over 23,000 clients had received PrEP an increase from 400 in 2018 when the programme started. We have managed to achieve these results through involvement of a wide range of stakeholders.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

We acknowledge the fact that we have not done so well and could do better in the following: condom programming, adolescent girls and young women and key populations. Key actions to overcome our identified gaps in our response are as follows:

**3.0 Condom programming;** the recently developed National Comprehensive Condom Strategy 2020-2025 will address gaps in knowledge about the triple benefit of condoms, existing gender inequalities, structural barriers, and stigma associated with condom use.

**4.0 Adolescents and Young People;** In the recently developed revised National Strategic Framework 2020-2023, Zambia will not only focus on Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) but also on Adolescent Boys and Young Men (ABYM). Some of the mitigation actions will include revision of the current approach to Comprehensive Sexuality Education as it is a great vehicle for knowledge, both in and out of school adolescents and young people.

**5.0 Key Populations;** Programming for Key Populations (KPs) remain our source of concern due to scanty data available. In collaboration with KP sub-groups and stakeholders, we have started conducting size estimation exercises for various KPs. Zambia will continue to enhance HIV prevention service delivery through a public health approach within the existing Government operational framework, laws and policies.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen**

The advent of COVID-19 has taught us great lessons. As a country we have begun to mainstream messaging of both COVID-19 and HIV prevention on all available platforms and spaces. Furthermore, the multi-sectoral nation response to the prevention and control of the COVID-19 pandemic in Zambia is riding on the multi-sectoral national Contingency and Response Plan to prevent and combat HIV in order to mitigate the personal, social and economic impacts of the two diseases. Implementation of the multi month dispensation has been scaled up. The Ministry of Health has also developed guidance on continuation of essential health services during the pandemic and beyond. In addition, Development of guidance from a beneficiary perspective is underway.

As I conclude, I wish to state that Zambia welcomes this meeting. It is an opportunity for all of us and our partners in the Global HIV Prevention Coalition to once again introspect and dedicate sufficient efforts and resources to the coalition so that the targets and aspirations of 2021-2025 are achieved as we move towards Ending AIDS by 2030. I hope the great minds in this meeting will discuss at length all the new ideas and innovates that we need to inject into the Global HIV Prevention Coalition Initiative to reach the last Mile.

Thank you!