

**Address by Mayor Patricia Aletta Mosito on the occasion World AIDS Day,
Union sports ground, Swartklip**

1 December 2011

Programme Director

**The General Manager of Anglo Platinum,
Mine Management of Anglo American Platinum mine**

Fellow councilors present here,

Kgosi Ramokoka

Leadership of Unions present here,

**Mine workers from Anglo American Platinum mine,
Ladies and gentlemen**

Dumelang; Avusheni, Good day, Goeie dag, Ndaa, Thobela

Programme Director, it is indeed a great honour and privilege for me to share this day with you and to be part of this very important event.

Today we join millions of people across the globe to mark World AIDS Day.

We join multitudes who have determined that this epidemic cannot be overcome without a concerted and coordinated effort.

We join millions who understand that the epidemic is not merely a health challenge. It is a challenge with profound social, cultural and economic consequences.

It is an epidemic that affects entire nations. Yet it touches on matters that are intensely personal and private.

Unlike many others, HIV and AIDS cannot be overcome simply by improving the quality of drinking water, or eradicating mosquitoes, or mass immunization.

It can only be overcome by individuals taking responsibility for their own lives and the lives of those around them.

Programme Director,

In every sector of society, there are individuals and groups who have worked tirelessly to educate, advocate, care, treat, prevent and to break the stigma that still surrounds the epidemic.

Today, we wish to acknowledge their dedicated efforts.

We know that the situation is serious. We have seen the statistics.

We know that the average life expectancy of South Africans has been falling, and that South Africans are dying at a young age.

We have seen the child-headed and granny-headed households, and have witnessed the pain and displacement of orphans and vulnerable children.

These facts are undeniable. We should not be tempted to downplay the statistics and impact or to deny the reality that we face.

At the same time, the epidemic is not about statistics. It is about people, about families, and communities.

It is about our loved ones.

For many families, it is a burden that they have to bear alone, fearful of discrimination and stigma.

Programme Director,

Now is not the time to lament. It is the time to act decisively, and to act together.

Our message is simple. We have to stop the spread of HIV. We must reduce the rate of new infections. Prevention is our most powerful weapon against the epidemic.

All South Africans should take steps to ensure that they do not become infected, that they do not infect others and that they know their status, because through the infected we have the affected.

Each individual must take responsibility for protection against HIV. To the youth, the future belongs to you.

Be responsible and do not expose yourself to risks.

Parents and heads of households let us be open with our children and educate them about HIV and how to prevent it. Let's talk robustly about unsafe sex.

Programme Director,

We are still marking the 16 days of activism against violence on women and children. During this period, it is important that we also remember to uphold the rights of women and children, including their right to protection from infection with HIV.

Many women are unable to negotiate for protection due to unequal power relations in relationships.

As we mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on Saturday, the 3rd of December, let us remember the impact of HIV on persons with disability.

Every South African should know his or her HIV status.

We can eliminate the scourge of HIV if all South Africans take responsibility for their actions.

I need to re-emphasize at this point that we must intensify our prevention efforts if we are to turn off the tap of new HIV and TB infections. Prevention is our most powerful and effective weapon.

We have to overcome HIV the same way that it spreads - one individual at a time. We have to really show that all of us are responsible. As we know that prevention is better than cure, Abstain, Be faithful and Condomise(ABC).

The HIV tests are voluntary and they are confidential. We know that it is not easy. It is a difficult decision to take.

But it is a decision that must be taken by people from all walks of life, of all races, all social classes and all positions in society. HIV does not discriminate.

Programme Director,

On this day, our hearts go out to all South Africans who are in distress as a result of this epidemic. To families looking after sick relatives, we wish you strength. We understand what you are going through.

To those who have lost their loved ones to the epidemic we share your pain, and extend our deepest condolences.

Programme Director,

At another moment in our history, in another context, the liberation movement observed that the time comes in the life of any nation when there remain only two choices: **submit** or **fight**.

That time has now come in our struggle to overcome AIDS.

Let us declare now, as we declared then, that we shall not submit.

We have no choice but to deploy every effort, mobilise every resource, and utilise every skill that our nation possesses, to ensure that we prevail in this struggle for the health and prosperity of our nation.

History has demonstrated the strength of a nation united and determined.

We are a capable, innovative and motivated people.

Together we can overcome this challenge.

Let today be the dawn of a new era.

Let there be no more shame, no more blame, no more discrimination and no more stigma.

Let this be the start of an era of openness, of taking personal responsibility, and of working together in unity to prevent HIV infections and to deal with its impact.

Working together, we can achieve these goals!

I thank you.