



ADDRESS BY

HIS EXCELLENCY THE FORMER PRESIDENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA
MR FESTUS G. MOGAE

AT THE

ANNUAL EXECUTIVE SUMMIT
OF THE AFRICAN BROADCAST MEDIA
PARTNERSHIP AGAINST HIV/AIDS (ABMP)

Johannesburg, South Africa
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Director of Ceremonies,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I feel honoured to be addressing a gathering of broadcasting executives because you are strategic partners in the fight against HIV and AIDS. I commend you for establishing such a potential powerful coalition of broadcasters with one bold objective – to wage war against HIV/AIDS.

2. We need such visionary leadership in Africa if we are to halt the spread of HIV and AIDS. Broadcasting, particularly radio, remains the most effective and cheapest medium of mass communication in Africa because of its wide coverage. You are, therefore, well positioned to help mobilise the African leadership to take up this responsibility and save the African population.

3. Our part of the world, Sub-Saharan Africa, remains the most affected by the pandemic. The majority of people living with HIV and AIDS are in this region.

The region is home to more than one third of HIV infections and AIDS deaths. A total of 22 million Africans are living with HIV and AIDS. AIDS killed 1.5 million people in 2007, making it the leading

cause of death in Africa. Its sub-region of Southern Africa is the epicenter of this global problem.

4. This is a wake up call for Africa's leadership to lead the war against HIV and AIDS from the front. This leadership includes people such as you. We cannot afford to relegate this responsibility to the civil society and lower ranks of our societies. The Africa's masses are looking to the leadership at all levels to lead the war against HIV and AIDS.

5. Botswana's top leadership took that responsibility when the first AIDS case was diagnosed in Botswana in 1985. We did not waste time arguing about where it originated and how many people were infected. We responded by developing structures and programmes that mobilised the general population, the workers, the media, civil society, traditional leaders, traditional healers, business community, religious organisations, schools and many other sectors. The campaign was led by me as president and chairperson of the National AIDS Council. This is how serious we regarded the problem.

6. However, I am not here to speak about how we responded to the problem in Botswana, but to appeal for your support in the

fight against HIV and AIDS. I know I am preaching to the converted who have already established structures to fight HIV and AIDS. The major challenge is for us to work together and face the common enemy threatening to decimate the African population.

7. There are a number of issues that have been identified as key drivers of the epidemic in Southern Africa.

These include high population mobility, inequalities of wealth, cultural factors, gender inequality, male attitudes and behaviors, intergenerational sex, gender and sexual violence, stigma, lack of openness and untreated sexual transmitted infections, and multiple concurrent sexual partnerships by men and women who use condoms inconsistently.

8. I implore you to interrogate these issues. Expose the practice of multiple concurrent sexual partners, intergenerational sex and make them socially unacceptable. Expose violence against women, sexual coercion and cultures that disempower women as unacceptable and harmful to Africa.

9. I have heard of your television and radio campaign featuring and targeting young people. Your approach is visionary and paints Africa free of HIV and AIDS. Our hope of an AIDS-Free Africa rests on winning the hearts and minds of our youth. I commend you for this campaign because young people are the future of this continent.

10. I appeal to you to assist in promoting the involvement of African leaders in the fight against HIV and AIDS. You can use your power to advocate for more resources and direct involvement of the top leadership. You have influence to mobilise public opinion in support of increased leadership involvement in HIV prevention efforts.

11. Last month I hosted the inaugural meeting of an initiative called Champions for an AIDS-Free Generation which is a group of former African presidents and other prominent personalities. Their mandate is to mobilise leadership, inform global leaders and policy makers to renew and revitalise HIV response.

12. In our campaign, we will meet with media executives such as you, to promote positive messages about an AIDS-Free Generation; articulate the need for a more effective response on

prevention, and the importance of accountability for results. I am happy that your media campaign's goal is also aimed at ensuring that we create an AIDS-Free Generation Africa.

13. As I said earlier I regard your organisation as a strategic partner in the fight against HIV and AIDS. I am happy that you sent a representative to the Champions meeting in Gaborone. I formally invite you to be part of the Champions for an AIDS-Free Generation. I believe that together we can drive the message through and win the involvement of Africa's leadership.

I thank you.