

Press Release
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**President Mogae Launches “Champions for an HIV-free Generation”
African Leaders Call for Redoubled Efforts to Prevent the Spread of HIV**

MEXICO CITY – Festus Mogae, former President of Botswana, who won international praise for his battle against the HIV epidemic in his country, on August 5th launched “Champions for an HIV-free Generation,” a group of renowned African leaders calling for their peers to rethink and step up efforts to prevent the spread of HIV.

The group of champions includes Joaquim Chissano, former President of Mozambique, Benjamin Mkapa, former President of Tanzania, Kenneth Kaunda, former President of Zambia, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Ethiopian super model Liya Kebede, South African Supreme Court of Appeal Justice Edwin Cameron, and Professor Miriam Were, chair of the Kenyan National AIDS Control Council.

“Thanks to the unprecedented effort of the global community, millions are now receiving life-saving AIDS treatment – but for every two people we treat in Africa this year, five more are infected. We urgently need innovation and invigoration of HIV prevention in Africa,” said Mogae, who called for strong regional leadership.

The Champions, highly visible leaders from all over Africa and different walks of life, will mobilize leadership in Africa and advocate effective policies and action on HIV prevention. As outspoken opinion-leaders, they will seek to initiate a dialogue in changing behavioral and societal norms. “Not everyone might be comfortable with it but we need to talk about HIV, about stigma, about our behavior, because silence and inaction are fatal,” said Miriam Were.

“Stronger, more visionary and outspoken leadership must come from the continent most affected by this epidemic,” said Edwin Cameron. “We must ourselves take more initiative to advance the practical solutions in prevention and treatment.”

“We have the solutions, but we need to dramatically increase our prevention efforts in a new and innovative way, which is why we welcome President Mogae’s initiative,” said Ambassador Mark Dybul, Coordinator of the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), speaking for the public and private institutions endorsing the group of Champions. Part of the prevention efforts will be the promotion of a delay in sexual debut, of safe male circumcision and HIV prevention to young men, and of a reduction in the number of concurrent sexual partners.

The collaborating partners, the World Bank, UNAIDS, the World Health Organization, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and PEPFAR aim to increasingly focus on HIV prevention in southern Africa and will seek to increase collaboration to support this effort in the most efficient and effective way.

The Champions will be assisted by a small secretariat at the SADC headquarters in Gaborone, Botswana and will coordinate with and build upon activities by regional, international and private actors.

Sub-Saharan Africa is home to more than one third of all new HIV infections and AIDS deaths. 22 million Africans are living with HIV/AIDS and AIDS killed 1.5 million people in 2007, making it the leading cause of death in Africa.