

MEDIA RELEASE

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The World's biggest AIDS Congress is indeed coming back to Durban

KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo will be jetting off to Melbourne, Australia, tomorrow (Friday 18 July 2014) for the International AIDS Congress 2014. He will be presenting South Africa's success story in the fight against Aids and will take note of how the conference is being hosted before it returns to Durban in 2016. South Africa last hosted the International Aids Congress in Durban in 2000, when the late Nkosi Johnson made an appearance.

In the Australian Congress MEC Dhlomo will be sharing the stage with other high-level speakers, such as President Bill Clinton, founder of the Clinton Foundation and 42nd President of the United States; UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé as well as artist and activist Sir Bob Geldof. He will also join thousands of the world's top AIDS researchers: community leaders, people living with HIV and policy-makers in the deliberations. Even though Deputy President, Hon Cyril Ramaphosa, won't be personally attending, he will also address the Congress via a video link, tabulating what has been achieved after the 2012 Congress which was held in the US.

The 20th International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2014) is the premier gathering for those working in the field of HIV, including scientists, medical practitioners, activists, policymakers, people living with HIV and others committed to ending the epidemic. It is a tremendous opportunity for researchers from around the world to share the latest scientific advances in the field, learn from one another's expertise, and develop strategies for advancing all facets of collective efforts to treat and prevent HIV. This 2014 Congress that will be held from 20–25 July 2014 at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre is expected to convene over 12,000 participants from nearly 200 countries, including over 800 journalists.

Dr Dhlomo's address at the Congress will focus on South Africa's quest to reduce new HIV infections to less than 1% and HIV/Aids-related morbidity and mortality by 2016. He will tell the world about significant strides that are being made to curb the spread of HIV/Aids in South Africa. These include the country's Multi-Sectorial response to TB, HIV and AIDS, with full representation of sectors of ward base level: local district municipality and provincial Aids councils led by political champions. His presentation will also cover initiatives like the Nurse-Initiated Management of ARVs, the provision of Post Exposure Prophylaxis to rape victims even before cases are reported to the police as well as the establishment of HIV and TB testing in non-medical sites.

Dr Dhlomo will also speak of successes borne out of switching all stable Regimen 1 patients to a Fixed Dose Combination as well as services that are provided to youth in institutions of higher learning through initiatives, such as "First Things First" and "Graduate Alive". He will also inform the world about the successes yielded by initiatives like HIV Testing and Counselling; Medical Male Circumcision; Anti-retroviral Treatment (ART) that has made KwaZulu Natal the biggest site in the world with more than 841 000 patients on the programme.

"It is my firm belief that by the time we host this Congress here in Durban in 2016, South Africa will be telling a different story on prevalence and new infections," says Dhlomo.

Ends

