

**SPEECH BY KZN HEALTH MEC MRS NP NKONYENI ON  
THE OCCASION OF A DINNER HOSTED BY THE  
POLISH CONSUL – 11 MAY 2006**

Thank you Prof Walker.

Honorable Consul-General of the USA, Mr Eugene Young,  
and

Honorable Consul of Poland, Mr Andrzej Kiepiela

Friends, ladies and gentlemen

We are gathering here around an issue that is a great challenge to all of us. This virus called HIV has already infected over 60 million persons in the world, and our Province has been one of the hardest hit. The towns and villages of our province are littered with child-headed households and households that are headed by the elderly, thanks to a virus that is wreaking havoc with the younger generations of our province. The saddest part of this is that neither the caregivers nor those who should help come up

with a cure are spared as HIV continues its deadly march forward.

It is easy to despair when one looks at the scale of the devastation that HIV leaves in its wake. Quite clearly the battle against HIV is not one that the government can fight alone. We need all the resources – material, financial, intellectual, medical, etc – that we can get. We need all the partners that we can get to push back the frontiers of HIV devastation. This is why it is always such a pleasure for me to honour the call of anyone involved in helping our government in its battle against HIV and AIDS. From scientists to philanthropists to the international community, we all have a responsibility to play our role in making sure that ours is the last generation to watch helplessly as our families, friends and colleagues are mowed down by HIV.

The work of organizations like the South African AIDS Vaccine Initiative (SAAVI) is a crucial cog in the wheels of the battle against HIV. Millions of South Africans are looking with hope in their hearts that one day very soon the long awaited news will come that an affordable, effective and locally relevant AIDS vaccine has been found. We can only wish SAAVI and its partners and associates the best in all its efforts.

Gloomy as the HIV picture sometimes is, significant progress has been made, both by us a provincial Department of Health and by many partners and stakeholders in the province and nationally. We need to acknowledge and celebrate this progress.

My Department will continue with the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan to combat HIV and AIDS. Among some of the interventions we will focus on shortly are our Youth Health programmes, as we believe that this is where meaningful health promotion gains can be made. Home based care services will also be enhanced. Very soon the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission Programme (PMTCT) will be integrated with our Maternal Child and Woman's Health Programme, to ensure a more integrated continuum of care. Across our province a total of 60 hospitals, 598 Primary Health Care clinics, 14 Community Health Care Centres and 43 mobiles provide Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) services. This service also provides an entry point for both PMTCT and the ART programme. In addition,  
There are 58 non-medical sites that have been established which are

providing VCT services. We have also made significant progress with the Anti Retroviral Treatment (ART) rollout programme. A total of 53 out of 55 sites that were identified to give treatment are now fully accredited and operational, including Edendale Hospital. The remaining 2 sites function as complexes with nearby facilities. I am told that this programme is also working very well as St Mary's and at McCords. This means that ARV treatment is accessible at all hospitals and in all districts in this province. Ongoing staff training and expansion of ARV treatment service to clinics will continue to ensure increased and convenient access to treatment.

Right here in Durban at our Medical School, we have a world renowned research institute, lead by Professor Jerry Coovadia: the Doris Duke Medical Research Institute, which is focusing on key issues for HIV vaccine development. And we have faculty members like Drs. Kiepiela and N'Dungu who are not only conducting cutting edge research but are also training the next generation of African scientists. The grant from SAAVI that they have just received is a tribute to their leadership and creativity, and provides clear evidence of the power of collaboration -- the kind of effective teamwork that will be required to finally put an end to this epidemic. It is thus with great honor and

pride that I join you tonight in this celebration, and in acknowledging the role played by all our partners in the battle against HIV. In Zulu when we are truly grateful we say “Kwande la nithathe khona” which loosely means “May there be more where your generosity came from.”

I thank all of you.