

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

**BY**

**HIS EXCELLENCY PAA KWESI BEKOE AMISSAH-ARTHUR,  
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA**

**ON THE OCCASSION OF  
THE NATIONAL DURBAR OF 2013 WORLD AIDS DAY**

**&**

**THE LAUNCH OF THE GAC SUPPORTED CHRAJ WEB-BASED STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION  
REPORTING PLATFORM**

**PROTECT THE GOAL CAMPAIGN**

**AT THE JUBILEE PARK, WA**

**ON**

**MONDAY 2ND DECEMBER 2013**

Good morning.

Today is the commemoration of the 2013 World AIDS Day. We decided that this year's celebration should be held in the Upper West Region, away from the capital, Accra where most national activities are usually held.

The commemoration of the national World AIDS Day in Wa gives us the opportunity to bring the HIV message closer to the people.

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN**

We have come a long way from the mid 1980s, when the first AIDS cases were diagnosed.

During the eighties, scientific knowledge on the virus and the epidemic was very limited. To be HIV infected connoted death. The term killer disease was often used to describe the infection. This lack of knowledge resulted in a high level of anxiety in the population.

Thankfully, due to the improvement in scientific knowledge, global and national efforts at addressing the epidemic, it is now common knowledge that being HIV positive is not a death sentence. HIV positive persons can now live healthy and productive lives.

We also know that, we do not have to be afraid of people living with HIV because living, eating and interacting with them will not get us infected with the virus.

As a nation, it is important that we learn our lessons and collectively show appropriate behaviour towards our brothers and sisters living with HIV.

It is commendable that due to the awareness campaign pursued over the years by the Ghana AIDS Commission and its partners HIV and AIDS-related stigma and discrimination has been reducing.

The *Heart-to-Heart* campaign, which was launched in 2011, has toured the country to campaign against HIV and AIDS-related stigma and discrimination and to educate the population on the risk factors for HIV infection.

The Heart to Heart Ambassadors and other persons living with HIV have used their personal lives and circumstances as 'Models of Hope' for other HIV positive persons.

I salute all the HIV Ambassadors for their dedication and commitment. Ghana continues to be committed to protecting the rights of persons living with HIV. We will continue to ensure that we also eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV to guarantee an HIV Free Generation in Ghana, while keeping mothers and the entire family alive.

Achieving less than 5% mother-to-child transmission of HIV by 2015 must be the next important goal to be achieved. We will work hard on closing the resource gap needed to help Ghana accelerate to zero new infections, zero stigma and discrimination, zero AIDS-related deaths by 2015.

## **LADIES AND GENTLEMEN**

Ghana has taken the pioneering role to actualize the African Union (AU) action plan on local production of ARVs.

Government will continue to provide leadership for this initiative and ensure that our pharmaceutical companies meet the criteria to obtain the necessary WHO pre-qualification to produce ARV locally.

This is the most efficient means to get more People Living with HIV on treatment.

The government cannot achieve the goals of the national response to HIV & AIDS alone.

We need communities, Civil Society Organizations, the private sector, religious leaders and the general population to continue playing your roles as social partners to ensure that every section of our community will be reached with HIV and AIDS information and services.

**CHAIRMAN,**

Last year, the Government took steps to address the issue of cost as a barrier to accessing HIV treatment services and ultimately help Ghana get to zero AIDS related deaths.

The Ministry of Health was instructed to scrap the GHC 5.00 service charge paid by people living with HIV for treatment.

The Ghana AIDS Commission was also asked to ensure that all persons living with HIV get registered on the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS).

I am happy to note that these directives have been carried through.

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN**

As we commemorate this day, my special appeal to everyone is to play your role, no matter how small, in eliminating HIV in Ghana.

There are many ways of doing that.

You can start by testing to know your HIV status and live an informed life thereafter.

You can abstain from sex or use a condom if you must.

You can encourage our sisters, mothers and female colleagues and relatives to access prevention of mother-to-child (PMTCT) services to save our newborn babies from being infected with HIV.

Last but not the least, you can show love to those infected and affected by the disease by not discriminating against them.

This way, individually and collectively, we can contribute to the national HIV and AIDS response and succeed further and more quickly in eliminating the epidemic.