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**KWAZULU NATAL HIV/AIDS INDABA GALA DINNER
REMARKS BY
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I wish to thank the Premier of KwaZulu Natal for having offered me the opportunity to say a few words during this important KwaZulu Natal HIV/AIDS Indaba. Today, during the entire day, important and extensive discussions have been held to highlight the dramatic nature of the problem of HIV/AIDS confronting us and to identify wide ranging strategies to deal with it. As we have reached the evening of a hard day of work, and we are in the setting of a dinner rather than that of a workshop, I do not wish to labour on this occasion on any of the many themes which have seized the discussion of our conference. I also do not feel that it is necessary for me to stress the importance of our deliberations, nor the dramatic nature of a situation which is decimating our people and imposing on our country a toll of human suffering and economic devastation, greater than any war we have ever experienced. In fact, what I feel ought to be highlighted on an occasion such as this one, is the great strength, resilience and resourcefulness of the people of our province.

Today I feel heartened in seeing the people of KwaZulu Natal coming together to take charge of forging a solution to our grave problem of HIV/AIDS. I feel that the seeds which we planted together almost a quarter of a century ago, when we came together in the Buthelezi Commission, have grown into full maturity. Twenty five years ago we began a

process which brought the people of goodwill of this province together across any existing cultural, racial, social and economic divides. Together, I see convened in this conference a group of determined leaders who have the same courage and determination of those who brought together the leaders who assembled in the KwaZulu Natal Indaba of 1986, to forge a new future for KwaZulu Natal beyond the restriction of apartheid and the oppression of racism. Today's challenge is much greater, momentous and tremendous than the one we faced twenty five years ago. However, as we twenty five years ago were deeply convinced that in the end we would overcome apartheid and oppression. Today I can feel in the positive energies of this conference, the same spirit which spells out the conviction that we shall overcome.

I come here carrying the burden of many many funerals of young people which I have attended. Each of us has known many people who have HIV/AIDS and the many who have suffered and died because of it. Each of us has made a commitment to consider the war on HIV/AIDS, not only as our first priority, but indeed as the paramount priority which conditions and qualifies whatever else our Government or our society is engaged in doing. My plea to all of you is to make sure that this Indaba will not be remembered for what has been said during the few days that we have convened at the International Convention Centre in Durban. This Indaba must be remembered for what it will produce in the most remote communities of KwaZulu Natal. It must be remembered as the moment we turned around the fortunes of the war on HIV/AIDS and placed our province on a clear path towards defeating this pandemic. I plead with you, I urge you, I almost beg you, to make sure that the end of this conference is nothing but the beginning of a process which co-

ordinates in a compelling fashion as much as possible of what any of the components of our society, which are represented in this conference, can and must do to contribute to a successful victory in the war against HIV/AIDS. We must ensure that out of this Indaba a real work council is established, which can co-ordinate Government actions and programmes with the contributions of NGO's, business and other organs of civil society so as to forge a number of partnerships which can move the whole of our province along the clear strategic directions which will emerge from this conference. If what is said here remains a mere declaration of intent, or a statement of principles, we will have failed the greatest mission that history has given us the opportunity to accomplish. Unless we set in place clear, effective and permanent mechanisms to carry out the deliberations of this Indaba, anything which is said here will be written as part of our own indictment for having failed in the moment of our province's greatest need.

In my long life which spans over more than half a century of commitment to politics, public affairs and government, I have known nothing but the rigid discipline of fulfilling a mission. I have dedicated my life to bringing about the liberation of the oppressed masses of South Africa in a framework which could liberate both the oppressed and the oppressors in a win win solution. I have dedicated my life to pursuing the economic prosperity of South Africa to ensure that economic growth could eventually eradicate poverty and bring about development. I have pursued the lifelong mission of seeking the restoration of our Zulu Kingdom, within the parameter of a unified South Africa. These and many other missions I felt compelled to pursue in my life and have dedicated to them, all my efforts. However, as I stand before you today, I feel that no other mission seems to be greater nor more

important than the one which has brought us together. I wish to dedicate the rest of my life, political efforts and commitment in public affairs, to pursue the mission of eradicating forever the scourge of HIV/AIDS from our country.

We are coming here together in this venue and on this occasion from different walks of life. Some of us have pursued a career in Government, others in politics. Some are professional people, scientists, academics or administrators of Non Governmental Organisations. However, irrespective of our position in life, all of us are leaders in our own right and have been placed in positions which carry the responsibility of making a contribution towards the welfare of others. Therefore, I feel that each of you is somehow in a position similar to my own, having pursued a number of missions, endeavours and purposes until now. Therefore, I wish to urge you to rethink about the purposes which have moved your career and personal and professional growth up to this point, to consider whether you too should not endorse the mission of making the war against HIV/AIDS your first and paramount priority for the years to come.

As a traditional leader, I realise how much anyone can do in the war against HIV/AIDS, merely by virtue of looking at differently our own position of leadership and the responsibility that it involves. Most traditional leaders, such as myself, have no particular education in the field of public medicine and yet we have discovered that we have a huge contribution to make towards solving this public health emergency. As traditional leaders, we have identified how the war on HIV/AIDS requires moral leadership and calls for people reaching levels of enhanced awareness about things which are so essential to their lives.

The war against HIV/AIDS calls on communities to change the way ^{they} to operate so as to respond to the call of need of those who are infected as well of those who are affected by this disease. It requires strengthening the ties of social solidarity and promoting the condition of a social environment, in which everyone becomes more responsible to alleviate the sufferings of others. It requires providing special attention to the education, formation and upbringing of children in spite of many family units becoming dysfunctional. It is a challenge which has called on traditional leaders, to exercise the full measure of the moral leadership within communities, to act as catalysts to people coming together to help one another, become more familiar with the hard facts of HIV/AIDS and join hands in running programmes which can prevent the spreading of the disease, and address its effects on those who are infected or affected by it. As traditional leaders, we had to go through a steep learning curve and ask ourselves what we could do under the present circumstances to change things in our community for the better. I feel that business leaders, community leaders, leaders in Government, leaders in the churches and leaders in NGO's have a similar challenge and that on the success of such a challenge, the fortune of our war on HIV/AIDS really hinges.

As traditional leaders, we have often felt that the problem confronting us was much larger than our own resources, and yet as we began addressing it, we saw the great positive impact which one could bring to bear in dealing with this problem. I am sure that as business leaders apply their mind to what they can do in their workplaces to provide a contribution, they too will find that there are a thousand ways not previously explored, in which they can make a difference, and the same applies to all the other fields of leadership

which are represented in this Indaba. My plea to all of you is that this Indaba may mark the beginning of a new commitment to be carried out at all levels of our society, by people who have discovered that there is much more that they can do to fight and win this war than they have ever thought before.

I hope that the more significant players in this Indaba will continue to dedicate a significant portion of their time to make sure that this Indaba remains alive after the conclusion of our discussions at the International Convention Centre in Durban. From this place the Indaba must move into the communities and transform our deliberations into concrete actions. The Indaba must also create mechanisms which can effectively monitor how the many partnerships which have been formed here, actually perform and deliver on their promises. This cannot happen if those convened here feel that their responsibility to this process has been fulfilled merely by virtue of their attendance at this Indaba. We have begun a process which will require all of us to be more involved and more committed and I plead with each of you to make the time, the resources and the efforts available. It is not going to be easy but together we shall overcome. In this great tragedy of ours I see the blessing of an opportunity which perhaps God Almighty is giving as a silver lining to this terribly dark cloud of HIV/AIDS. We have the opportunity of forging again our nation in a joint effort which underpins and highlights our shared humanity. We have the opportunity of giving birth to a new nation which is freed from HIV/AIDS and has been forged by a war which has not placed men against men and has not divided families and communities, but rather by a war which in unprecedented fashion, has forced people to close ranks in responding to the call of social solidarity. In this tragedy of ours we have the opportunity of becoming more

human, more caring and more loving, and in so doing, creating the basis for a process of national renewal which can give our nation everlasting strength, courage, vision and unity, even more than our liberation struggle did.

Therefore, I hope that this Indaba can indeed create a new spirit of unity within the people of our province, to unleash a new type of humanitarianism which is the real basis for a genuine Renaissance on the recognition that HIV/AIDS affects all of us and that no-one is immune from it, because even though not infected, anyone of us may become affected by it by virtue of those who are dear to us being infected, or themselves affected. The chain of sufferings must now become a chain of solidarity which recognises that we are all tied together in this fight and that this war of ours will temper a new nation which has now the opportunity of combining courage and determination with a deep sense of humanity and social solidarity. I hope that this Indaba will be remembered for the way in which it will change our Government in making it more effective, more responsive and more focussed on what needs to be done in respect of HIV/AIDS. I hope that this Indaba will also be remembered for how it has changed our province by promoting people to work together in creating partnerships which will survive the present situation of emergency to become the basis on which much broader development work can be performed. However, I also hope that this Indaba will be remembered for how it will begin to change the heart and soul of the people of KwaZulu Natal, making all of us become more deeply human, more deeply loving and more deeply caring so that we can be scored on our prosperity, division of a more just, more compassionate and more caring society.

I thank you for being part of a moment which can become so foundational of many things to come. I thank you for the efforts you have made during this Indaba and, most of all, I thank you for the efforts which I hope you have committed yourself to make as you bring this Indaba into your workplaces, communities, families and other realities in which you exercise your leadership role.

May God bless us and sustain us in our mission and may He give us the strength to rise to the challenge before us.

I thank you.

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