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**SPEECH FOR THE COMMEMORATION OF WORLD AIDS DAY AT KOLOLO CEREMONIAL GROUNDS.**

**BY**

**BABIRYE MILLY BABALANDA**

**MINISTER FOR THE PRESIDENCY**

**1st December 2021**

* His Excellency President of the Republic of Uganda, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni;
* The First Lady and Minister for Education and Sports;
* Cabinet Ministers present;
* Ambassadors Present;
* The UN Resident Coordinator;
* Members of Parliament present
* Permanent Secretaries;
* All Development Partners;
* Representatives of People living with HIV;
* Ladies and Gentlemen
1. I am honored and privileged to welcome all of you to this important day when we commemorate the World AIDS Day in Uganda.
2. I wish to thank the Uganda AIDS Commission and our Partners for organizing this colorful event amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Each year, Uganda AIDS Commission (UAC) under the Office of the President mobilizes partners at national and sub-national levels to observe and participate in activities marking the World AIDS Day.

This event provides a powerful advocacy platform to awaken communities in the fight against HIV and AIDS and to reflect on our successes and challenges in the fight against the pandemic.

1. Your Excellency, we applaud your strong leadership in the fight against HIV and AIDS which has been demonstrated globally since the onset of this pandemic.

You rallied all Ugandans to come together to fight this common enemy and Indeed, a lot has been achieved as reported by the Director General of the Uganda AIDS Commission.

1. To our Development Partners, we wish appreciate your unwavering support to the Government of Uganda in this area. We pledge to work with you in the fight against HIV/AIDS and other pandemics. As government we recognize all the contributions and all the support you have rendered to the HIV/AIDS response.
2. Your Excellency; since I assumed office, I have seen and I hereby commend the partnership approach government adopted and is implementing through the Uganda AIDS Commission to bring all the partners together to work towards achieving a common goal.

I receive monthly reports from the Uganda AIDS Commission on key strategic areas that stakeholders are engaged in; including government and Non-governmental Institutions that are tackling the AIDS pandemic in the Country. I would like to say that indeed; great success and progress is being made. I therefore congratulate and I urge you all stakeholders to continue working and supporting those infected and affected by HIV for the betterment of our country and for attainment of the Vision 2040.

However, Your, Excellency; there are those friends of ours in the name of partners who had made it their cause to use the AIDS platform to steal from donors and the people infected and affected by the AIDS problem. I accordingly directed the Director General of the Uganda AIDS Commission to strictly regulate operations of our stakeholders and to deal with the problem of fake AIDS organizations.

1. Ladies and Gentlemen, this year’s National World AIDS Day theme is **End Stigma, End AIDS, End the Pandemic**. I appeal to you all to recognize and support the Persons Living with HIV and AIDS in various ways including the following:

1. Firstly, let us recognize the 1.4 million people living with HIV in Uganda. This will ensure that they come out of hiding in order to access HIV services without any fear.
2. Secondly; let us offer them maximum social and emotional support in order to promote their dignity and positive living.
3. Thirdly; let us stop stigmatizing them.
4. Ladies and Gentlemen, in line with the above, the country has put in place measures to ensure HIV is mainstreamed in all sectors, under programs of the third National Development Plan.
5. At this point I wish to recognize the efforts of the Members of Parliament, under the leadership of the Rt. Hon. Speaker and the Committee Chairpersons who have promoted the AIDS agenda in legislation. You have supported the national cause for HIV and other pandemics. Please continue to offer this badly needed leadership and guidance especially to our young people who are our future leaders.
6. I wish also to thank my colleagues, the Ministers and all the government officials who supported and continue to support the People Living with HIV/AIDS during the COVID-19 lockdowns. The communities of People Living with HIV and AIDS express their gratitude for your involvement and assistance.

Indeed, your Excellency I have challenged all our leaders to always dedicate at least 2-5 percent of their public speeches to issues of HIV and AIDS as one way of re-energizing the message of AIDS in the population.

1. To the People Living with HIV and AIDS, I wish to thank you for standing firm, shining and contributing to national development. You have given your views and proposals on where the interventions and focus should be in order to attain results.
2. **At this juncture; I wish to invite all the People Living with HIV who are present here to stand up for recognition by our Chief Guest; H.E the President.**
3. Our Chief Guest, as I conclude; I wish to mention that your wisdom and leadership made Uganda to be among the eight countries in the whole world that achieved the global target of 90 to 90 to 90 by December 2020. That is to say: 90 percent of the population gets tested for the virus and 90 percent of those who test positive are put on treatment and eventually 90 percent of those on treatment are able to sustain on the treatment.
4. Your, Excellency; we have now adopted the new global targets of 95 to 95 to 95.

Indeed, your Excellency; after all these achievements and with only nine years left to the national target of completely ending AIDS as a public health problem in 2030; the Uganda AIDS Commission at my proposal is planning to document and put on record for the future generations all the atrocities committed by this virus to the people of Uganda since 1980. The Uganda AIDS Commission is planning to establish the first-ever Uganda AIDS Memory Museum.

This Museum will showcase and explain to our younger generations who did not see and neither feel the toughness and effects of this terrible pandemic especially in the early days of the eighties.

The Museum will also document the long journey of the NRM government and especially your leadership in the battle against this enemy.

The Uganda AIDS Commission already has land in Kampala City where this project can be established but will need funds to construct and equip the Museum.

1. Your Excellency; despite all the above, however; the Presidential Fast Track Initiative for Ending AIDS as a Public Health threat by 2030, still requires heavy Financing and Human Resources. Resources will be needed to achieve the targeted interventions which are highlighted in the National HIV Strategic Plan 2020/21 to 2024/25.

I therefore call for increased facilitation to the national response and adequate funding of the Uganda AIDS Commission.

1. Your Excellency; in support of your initiative to end AIDS by 2030; Kampala Capital City Youth with support from the Uganda AIDS Commission, the Uganda Scouts Association and the Uganda National Patriotism Secretariat trained 200 youths as peer mentors in HIV prevention, Patriotism and Mindset change.

This training took place at Kaazi Scouts Grounds.

1. Representatives of these youth from the five Divisions of Kampala are here today and I request you Sir, to Commission them after your speech.

The trained youth will take the message of HIV prevention to the five divisions of Kampala. It is anticipated that at least 10,000 youths will be reached and skilled in HIV services utilization by 30 December 2021.

Sir, on behalf of the Uganda AIDS Commission and as the Chief Coordinator of all the agencies in the fight against HIV and AIDS; allow me to commend you for the great effort you have displayed in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. However, I need to report to you that while we focused on the COVID challenge, there was a big laxity in the fight against AIDS. We do have fears that due to the effects of the lockdowns, there may be a resurgence in HIV infections countrywide just like it has happened with the teenage pregnancies.

And now with the new COVID strain of Omicron doing the rounds; we need to double vigilance especially through the Media to counter it’s impact on our already vulnerable society and especially on the AIDS situation in the country.

Your Excellency, because of the seriousness of this matter; I have been engaging leaders in forums organized by the Uganda AIDS Commission to remind them of their roles in the fight against HIV and AIDS and I have commissioned them to be HIV/AIDS Ambassadors in their communities.

I have had good support from the Speaker of Parliament; the Rt. Hon. Jacob Oulanya who has been very instrumental in mobilizing the Members of Parliament to support the activities of the AIDS Program.

I am however challenged to report to you; Your Excellency; the health workers and other caregivers especially in our upcountry stations who continue to mistreat and stigmatize HIV and AIDS patients. This is counterproductive to the targets we have set to end AIDS by 2030 and should be stopped.

1. It is now my honor and privilege to invite you; Your Excellency- the acclaimed global AIDS Champion; to come and address the nation.

HON. BABIRYE MILLY BABALANDA

**MINISTER IN CHARGE OF THE PRESIDENCY**