

Speech by UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director at the closing ceremony of the International Women's Summit

Saturday, 7th July 2007, 17:15h

Kenyatta International Conference Centre, Nairobi

Excellencies, friends and colleagues,

Let me start by saying how wonderful it has been to be back on the African continent and in Kenya.

Let me join others in thanking all the powerful speakers from the floor today. I would also like to thank the World YWCA and the International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS have moved mountains to make this Summit the success that it has been. I would particularly like to recognize Musimbi Kanyoro, Monica Zetzsche, Marijo Vasquez and Sophie Dilmitis and thank them for their leadership and vision in bringing us together.

I am very honored to be here in the company of so many dedicated women - and a few courageous men - from across the globe who are determined to make the AIDS response real for women and girls. And it is a great privilege to have been invited to speak here today on behalf of the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS.

The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS advocates for women's rights in the response to AIDS. It is an alliance of activists, civil society organizations, positive women's networks, UN agencies and the private sector. Our shared goal is to bring about concrete action to tackle gender inequality - one of the major drivers of the epidemic. We want to ensure that AIDS strategies respond to the real needs of women and girls so they do not get infected, and if infected, live healthy and productive lives. An AIDS response that does not have women at its core – including women living with HIV - is doomed to fail, as the response has failed women so far.

But his summit has made it clear that we are all part of a *grand* coalition that aspires to one shared purpose – an HIV response that works for women and girls.

Friends, this has been a historic summit. Why has it been historic?

Historic – because the women of the world, most especially young women and positive women, have come together in greater numbers than ever before in the history of the AIDS movement to give voice to the urgent and non-negotiable rights of women and girls in the context of HIV. Women, young women, positive women are on the move.

Historic – because we have heard so many examples of how women's leadership is making a real difference to individuals, families and communities around the world, whether we talk about human

rights, advocacy, programming, policies, or research. Women's leadership is on the move.

Historic – because there is a growing understanding and acceptance of the leadership positive women bring - and must bring - to every table where decisions are made that affect their lives. The leadership of positive women is on the move.

Historic – because the leadership of positive UN staff resulted in the launch of a chapter of UN+ here in Nairobi Positive colleagues, you are on the move and I want to pay special thanks to Kate Thomson, Bhatupe Mhango, Nais Mason and Jane Sinyei for making it happen.

Historic – because so many people confirmed that there is no such thing as a gender-neutral programme, nor should there ever be one in national responses to HIV.

Historic – because it is the first time that so many women confronting AIDS have affirmed the critical importance of ending violence as a core strategy against the epidemic. Violence must be on the move OUT of the lives of women and girls – and the lives of the men who perpetrate it.

Historic - because we have here in our hands the Nairobi Call to Action - made real in our own lives by the personal pledges we made this morning.

On behalf of the Global Coalition, I fully endorse the Call to Action and pledge the efforts of the Coalition to turn it into reality on the ground.

In support of the call to action, we will do everything in our power to promote the human rights of all women and girls, irrespective of their age, HIV status, or lifestyle choices. We will strive for women's economic empowerment so they are able to protect themselves from infection, put food on the table, and keep their children in school.

We will continue to advocate for more funding to reach women in grassroots communities and for this funding to be easily accessible to those who need it most. And we will advocate, for sustained research into female-initiated prevention tools, and for massive roll-out of prevention of parent-to-child transmission programmes.

We will speak loudly that positive and other women's organizations need a seat at the table as equal partners where policies, programmes and budgets which affect their lives are decided. As Louise said "Nothing about us, without us".

And we will carry the message that AIDS programmes that do not work for women, especially positive women, do not work for nations.

In the past three days, I think we have all been amazed by the range of powerful experience gathered at this summit. We leave Nairobi

with renewed passion, compassion, and energy. By forging this new global alliance we can speak louder and with greater force.

As we leave this meeting and travel back to the far corners of the world where we live and work, I urge us all to take this Call to Action and use it to transform principles and commitments into concrete steps on the ground. I urge us all to transform the very way we respond to HIV. I urge us all to move ourselves and our sisters towards full equality between women and men.

Keep up the good work, keep up the passion and the energy, and keep up the extraordinary commitment. Our collective power can change the world. We must, we can, and we will change the course of this epidemic!

Wanawake wanaweza

Wanawake waliweza

Na

Wanawake Wataweza

Asanten Sana

Thank you very much.