

Motlanthe says SA has made significant strides in fighting HIV, Aids

South Africa has made significant strides in the fight against HIV and Aids over the last two decades, Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe told delegates at the opening of the 19th International AIDS Conference in Washington DC, yesterday.



(Image: GCIS)

Among the achievements are 1.7 million people being placed on treatment; 20 million people having tested for HIV during the country's long testing campaign; and the decline of mother to child transmission from 8% in 2008 to 3.5% in 2010 and to 2.7% in 2011, the Deputy President said.

These accomplishments drew loud applause from delegates who since the 18th International Conference on Aids in Vienna, Austria, in 2010 have commended South Africa for its change of track in the fight against HIV and Aids.

At that conference, as was the case at this year's opening, UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé lauded South Africa and other African countries for scaling up their efforts in fighting the pandemic.

Motlanthe located South Africa's efforts within the context of the Roadmap on Shared Responsibility and Global Solidarity for Aids, TB and Malaria Response in Africa recently adopted by the African Unions Heads of State.

"This roadmap will explore a set of practical African-sourced solutions for enhancing shared responsibility and global responsibility.....and will focus on three strategic pillars: diversified financing, access to medicines; and enhanced health governance," he said.

The Deputy President warned that the successes achieved should not cause South Africa, the continent in general and funders to be complacent.

"This is not the time to reduce our contribution to the fight against HIV and Aids. We are still faced with many challenges as we move from the emergency phase to a phase of consolidation, scaling up and sustaining our multi-sectoral approach with a strengthened health system."

The theme of the six-day conference is "Turning the Tide Together" and is the world's largest meeting on HIV and AIDS. It is being attended by an estimated 25 000 people, including people living with HIV, social scientists, clinicians, activists, researchers and journalists.

Leading scientists will be reporting on the latest Aids research, and together with implementers, community leaders and policymakers, will help to identify next steps in the global response to Aids.

South Africa's Strategic Plan 2012 - 2016 focuses on eliminating HIV as advocated by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and Aids (UNAIDS). The vision for the country is zero new HIV and TB infections to vertical transmission, zero preventable deaths associated with HIV and TB and zero discrimination associated with HIV and TB.

Motlanthe is being accompanied by a South African delegation that includes Minister of Health Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, Deputy Minister of Women, Children and People Living with Disabilities Henrietta Bogopane-Zulu and Deputy Minister of Social Development Maria Ntuli.

While in Washington, Motlanthe will also hold bi-lateral meetings with donor agencies and other stakeholders. He will also meet with senior members of the US Congress, including the Congressional Black Caucus.

Other speakers at the conference include US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton as well as World Bank President Jim Yong Kim.

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