ADDRESS BY HIS GRACE THE RIGHT REVERND BISHOP DR BE LEKGANYANE ON
THE OCCASION OF LAUNCHING THE BOTSWANA FAITH STRATEGIES ON 24TH
NOVEMBER 2013 AT THE NATIONAL STADIUM, GABORONE, BOTSWANA.

Master of ceremonies
His Excellency the President of the Republic of Botswana
His Honourable the Vice President
Their Excellency’s Former Presidents
Honourable Ministers
Honourable Members of Parliament
Members of Diplomatic Corps
President of the Customary of Appeal
Head of UN agencies and representatives
Magoši and Bishops of other churches
Chairperson of the National Faith Sector Coordinating Committee
District Commissioner
The Mayor
Councillors
Permanent Secretary – Ministry of Health
National Coordinator of NACA
Senior Government Officials
Faith Based Organisations
Baruti le maloko a ZCC
Baruti le maloko a dikereke tše dingwe
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Kamoka ga lena kere kgotso ga ebe le lena
Psalm chapter 133 verse 1 reads thus: “How wonderful it is, how pleasant, when brothers live in harmony! For harmony is as precious as the fragrant anointing oil that was poured over Aaron’s head, that ran down his beard and onto the border of his robe. Harmony is as refreshing as dew from Mount Hermon that falls on the mountains of Zion. And the Lord has pronounced his blessing, even life forevermore.” The aforementioned scripture rounds up the spirit with which today’s gathering is taking place. Setswana se re: “magora go ša mabapi”. I stand before you all as one of the Christians to launch the Botswana Faith-Based Organizations HIV and AIDS Response Strategy for the period 2011-2016. I commend the government of Botswana, particularly the ministry of Health for its effort, commitment and will in addressing the pandemic of HIV Aids in this country. The first Aids case in Botswana was reported in 1985. Since then, the government of Botswana has spent scarce millions of dollars to prevent the spread of HIV Aids. It has been a long way up until today. The objective of this event today is to disseminate HIV prevention-targeted strategies to the general public to guide planning and streamlining coordination of civil society organizations’ efforts in HIV and Aids response. Prevention takes place at several levels: Primary prevention focuses on preventing the onset of disease and at secondary level through prevention of re-infection, as well as control and management of chronic disease, palliation and rehabilitative process, psycho-social support and adherence counselling to treatment. Therefore, prevention needs a coordinated multifaceted approach, hence the need for a set of strategies to comprehensively address all needs of Batswana.

Peace be unto you

What is the role of the Faith Based Organization in the broader fight against the effects of HIV Aids? The Faith Based Communities are well positioned to drive prevention, treatment, care and support programs in communities. Science can and has provided anti-retroviral treatment BUT it cannot provide counselling and psycho-social support. The care, compassion, counselling and support that these communities provide for the sick and their families is priceless. We find words of encouragement from 3rd John chapter 1 verse 8 which says “Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for truth”. I strongly believe that with the involvement of the faith sector in the in the National prevention strategies. Botswana can reach the goal of the National Vision 2016 of Zero New infections, Zero discrimination and Zero Aids related deaths in the very near future.
In fact discrimination is based on the wrong thinking about the HIV. Albert Einstein said: “The world we have created is a product of our thinking; it cannot be changed without changing our thinking”. Together we can change the stigma about HIV and Aids, Motswana a re “fifing ga tshwaranwa ka dikobo”. We also believe that “bojang ga bo ipafe”.

Peace be unto you

We call upon the Botswana government to seriously and mercilessly clamp down on conmen and women who spread lies that they can heal HIV and Aids. I say this because I have noted that some people inside and outside various church groups abuse the name of God to rob people off their money claiming that they can cure HIV and Aids. We all know that there is no cure for HIV as yet, and we also know that with good and continued adherence to antiretroviral treatment, people living with HIV can remain well and productive for a long time. I want to urge Batswana to be vigilant of such crooks. But even equally important, Batswana should address the myth about other alleged cures for HIV and Aids. Babies are raped by people who believe that by doing so they can cure themselves of HIV. You must work hard to change those people’s minds. Mahatma Ghandi says: “A man is but the product of his thoughts. What he thinks, he becomes”. Another misconception is about men who believe that by circumcising they will never get HIV. According to the world Health Organization, male circumcision only reduces the risk of female-to-male sexual transmission of HIV by around 60%. This clearly shows that circumcision does not necessarily prevent HIV transmission.

Peace be unto you

I strongly advocate that instead of going to unauthorised circumcision schools where boys are dying from illnesses and septic wounds, it is advisable to consult a medical facility which will not put any life at risk. Don’t fool each other with fiction and lies. Remember what Proverbs chapter 13 verse 20 says: “Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm”. Nobody must ever misuse the rich cultural traditions of Batswana to perpetuate tendencies that will undermine the efforts to lower new HIV infections. I want to echo the words of former President Festus Mogae when he said: “Prevention of two and new infections should be our priority number three”.
How can this be achieved? For Faith Based Organization, you need to strongly preach abstinence among the young people and faithfulness among partners as well as building on their strength of teaching moral issues to facilitate behaviour change. The Positive Health, Dignity and Prevention (PHDP) Strategy must continue to address the needs of people living with HIV and Aids and their empowerment in HIV prevention and care. The government of Botswana must ensure that HIV and Aids information is available in a format accessible to the people with disabilities, as well as Couple HIV testing and counselling guidelines and strategies.

Peace be unto you

Given the fact that out of 35.3 million people who were recorded to be living with HIV in 2012, at least 2.1 million of them were adolescents, this begs for us to develop strategies that focus strictly on that group particularly because this is more true for adolescent girls in sub-Saharan Africa. At the end of 2012, close to 10 million people were receiving antiretroviral therapy in low and middle-income countries. However, over 16 million other people who are eligible to A.R.T.’s under new 2013 guidelines do not have access to antiretroviral drugs. I am happy that Botswana is among the leading Sub-Saharan countries that have achieved more than 80% of HIV treatment. Despite these achievements, Sub-Saharan Africa remains the most heavily affected region in global HIV epidemic with 2011 UNAIDS research findings confirming that an estimated 23.5 million living with HIV resided in Sub-Saharan Africa, representing 69% of global HIV burden. It is my belief that it is only through tirelessly working together that Botswana will win the fight against HIV Aids. Philippians chapter 1 verse 27 reads thus: “Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel”. Batswana ba re “mabogo dinku ‘a thebana.” We will continue to pray for the endless spirit of togetherness among the following Faith Based Organizations:

1. Botswana Council of Churches
2. Evangelical Fellowship of Botswana
3. Open Baptist Church
4. Botswana Christian AIDS Interventions Program
5. Organization of African Instituted Churches
6. Seventh Day Adventist
7. Botswana Muslim Association  
8. Bahai Community  
9. Botswana Hindu Society; and  
10. Scripture Union

Peace be unto you

In his address on World Aids Day in 2011, President Ian Khama said that since 2003 the number of deaths due to HIV and Aids has fallen by 60%. I want to challenge the President to also work tirelessly to reduce the rate of other social ills that have engulfed Botswana. You will do that with the help of the Faith Based Organizations, ZCC included. Our partnership as the ZCC and the people of Botswana stretches back many decades ago when my father, Bishop Edward Lekganyane used to deliver maize and corn for all the residents of Mochudi during the drought season many many moons ago. As the ZCC, we will continue to pray for the immediate end of drug and alcohol abuse by Batswana, particularly the youth. Botswana is not a violent country. Therefore it comes as a shock to me when I read and hear of stories of abuse of children and the elderly. The lesser one speaks about the ritual murders and the violent satanic ritual murders in general the better. There is no justification to all these. The lame excuse of lack of employment does not hold water. Yes it is true that unemployment in Botswana is at 27%, but that is no reason for anyone to resort to violence to make a living. Through all our prayers today, let all these be history.

Peace be unto you

As I conclude, let me refer you to the words found in the book of Galatians chapter 6 verse 9 which says: “And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up”. To those who are affected by HIV and Aids, the Faith Based Organizations will never judge you. Whether it was due to negligence on your part or not, God still loves you. Some of you, more especially women, HIV found you at home while you were being a faithful partner. For that, God will never forsake you in the midst of your misery. My parting message for you is in Exodus chapter 23 verse 25 which says: “Worship the Lord your God, and His blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you”. With those words, by the powers vested in me as the spiritual head of the Zion Christian Church, I hereby launch the Botswana Faith Based Organisations HIV Prevention Strategies.
Ke kgopela le emelele ka moka le tswaileleng mahlo ke dire thapelo ya go le šegofatša le go šegofatša morero wa tirelo ya lehono.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, I come to you in prayer and humility. Your greatness manifests itself in our wellbeing as your servants. Bless this congregation with all the desires of their hearts so that you may be glorified eternally. You have said it that whatever we ask in your name we shall receive. With humility and faith, I pray for the abundance of your holy spirit in the hearts and minds of all Botswana. I rebuke the devil and its demons of Satanism. I pray for the end of disease, crime and violence. Botswana shall be a land of peace and prosperity because you the God never fails. Father God, your congregation is yet to travel back to their respective places of residence and employment. Safeguard their journeys and ensure that they arrive alive. There are those who spent their last resources in order to get here and have no other means when they get back. Please reveal yourself to them that you are a God of miracles. With you the impossible is possible. Your children are busy or about to begin with their year-end examinations. Strengthen their intellectual abilities to excel in their education. Heal the sick and comfort the broken-hearted. May the jobless find employment. If 2013 was not a good year for others, let it pass, and I declare in your mighty name the year of 2014 to be a better year for them. For the commitments that have been made by the different organisations to fight the spread of HIV and Aids, I submit to you God, particularly the Botswana Faith Based Organization that please bless them with the vision of unity of purpose. For all that they shall achieve, shall be to glorify your name. I pray that you adopt their vision and mission to become your vision and mission. That way, they will be able to achieve their goals because their goals will be part of your plans. I only know one God and it is only through you that they shall triumph. I ask these in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Thero yaka e tla feelela mo.

Pula...Pula...Pula.