

**REMARKS FOR THE MINISTER FOR THE PRESIDENCY AT THE  
PRESS CONFERENCE FOR THE UPCOMING PHILLY LUTAAYA  
DAY ON 17 OCTOBER 2020**

**DATE:** 14/102020 (8:30-10:30am)

**VENUE:** *Office of the President*

The Chairperson of HIV Committee in Parliament

The Chair AIDS Development Partners,

UNAIDS Country Director,

Representatives of the Family of Philly Lutaaya

Representative of Inter Religious Council of Uganda,

Chairperson NAFOPHANU,

Executive Director UNYPA,

Board Chairman Uganda AIDS Commission,

Director General Uganda AIDS Commission,

Media fraternity, all protocol observed.

On 17<sup>th</sup> October we shall have a Philly Lutaaya Memorial Lecture in commemoration of the legendary man who was among the first to openly declare that he had HIV and therefore pioneered the fight against HIV and AIDS

When HIV/AIDS was first discovered in the 80's, little was known about it and many people were dying. Some thought it was as a result

of bad omen and that the affected families had been bewitched. There was a lot of fear among the general population because HIV/AIDS was indeed a death sentence because medicines were not easily accessible to many people at the beginning. Some of the effects of HIV and AIDS in the early days included death on massive scale that resulted into many child headed households and excessive stigma and discrimination of those who were infected and affected by HIV.

This is the time that Philly Bongoley Lutaaya, one of Uganda's greatest musicians, came out openly as having HIV/AIDS and started preaching about HIV and how each and every one should protect themselves. This was the beginning of Uganda's success story and Philly gave HIV/AIDS a face. He used music to convey a message of hope and to educate the population about HIV/AIDS and how to prevent it. He indeed pioneered the fight against stigma and discrimination of People Living with HIV/AIDS. Today, his song *Alone and Frightened* remains Uganda's anthem for HIV/AIDS.

Uganda has since made significant progress in reducing new HIV infections, HIV prevalence and AIDS related deaths. In the late 80's and early 90's HIV prevalence ranging from 18% among the general population up to 30% in specific population groups. It is now at 6.8% for women and 4.2% for men; 2.8% among young women and 1.1% among young men. There are approximately 1,400,000 people living with HIV and 1,200,000 of these are on treatment. There were 53,000 new HIV infections and about 20,000 AIDS related deaths in 2019 alone. Despite the work of Philly Lutaaya and other activists, stigma

and discrimination of people living with HIV remains a significant barrier in Uganda's fight against HIV/AIDS.

The recent Uganda Stigma Index study showed that stigma and discrimination of people living with HIV has reduced especially the external stigma (others thinking negatively about a person living with HIV) but internal stigma (oneself thinking negatively on how they are perceived by others because of their HIV status) remains persistent. As a result, many people with HIV delay to be tested, treated, fail to adhere to their medication and therefore cannot achieve viral suppression. Internal Stigma is especially high among the males compared to the females which explains the high AIDS related deaths among men compared to the females. Within the Key Population category, non-HIV related stigma and discrimination was almost six times more than the HIV related stigma compared to the general population yet their HIV prevalence is almost six times the national average in some instances. If they do not access services because of stigma, they will not achieve viral suppression hence they will be a constant source of HIV infection.

If we are to End AIDS by 2030, we need to fight stigma and discrimination. However, this requires the efforts of all of us. Government officials, religious leaders, private sector actors, cultural leaders, artists, media practitioners, teachers, parents and people living with HIV all have a role to play and need to be part of these efforts to end stigma and discrimination which is a critical barrier to ending AIDS as a public health threat.

I specifically call upon Persons Living with HIV to:

- Confront, challenge or educate someone who is stigmatizing and/or discriminating them against a PLHIV;
- Seek knowledge about organizations that he/she can go to for help if he/she experiences stigma or discrimination;
- Advocate for the rights of all people living with HIV and for the rights and support of marginalized groups of people affected or infected with HIV/AIDS;
- Provide support to people living with HIV through emotional, physical and referral support;
- Raise awareness and knowledge of the public about AIDS, including human rights and HIV stigma and discrimination.
- Voluntarily disclose his/her HIV status to the spouse or partner so as to prevent infection;
- Demand for his/her rights and ensure that they are observed and not violated.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all stakeholders including the AIDS Development Partners who have continued to provide support to ensure that People Living with HIV/AIDS have access to testing and treatment services.

I would like to thank the People living with HIV networks who continue to carry the legacy of Philly Bongoley Lutaaya and give the

AIDS fight a face. I thank all stakeholders for their role in fighting stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV.

I would like to thank the family of the late Philly Lutaaya for keeping his memory alive thus reminding us of his contribution to the HIV/AIDS fight.

I would like to thank H.E Gen. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni for the unwavering leadership to the National HIV Response over the years. H.E the President has demonstrated huge interest and deep knowledge in HIV and AIDS and other pandemics, the most recent battlefield being COVID19 all with great success.

**For God and my Country.**

**Esther M. Mbayo (MP)**

**Minister In-charge of the Presidency**