

**REMARKS BY MINISTER OF HEALTH DR JOE PHAAHLA
DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF SA EXHIBITION
STAND AT THE 24TH INTERNATIONAL AIDS CONFERENCE,
MONTREAL – CANADA**

THURSDAY, 29 JULY 2022 – 10H00

Thank You Facilitator, Dr Xulu

Greetings to leaders of provincial delegations

Premier of Mpumalanga, Mrs Refilwe Mtsweni-Tsipane

MECs for Health and Colleagues

SANAC CO-Chair Ms Steve Letsike and SANAC sector leaders

Leaders and members of Civil Society Organisations

Representatives of Business and Private Sector

Fellow and Proud South Africans

Good Morning – Bonjoog (Bonjour) – They say when you are in Rome, you must do as the Romans do.

Welcome to this colourful and attractive SA exhibition stand which narrates a summarised journey about our efforts and investment in the long battle against HIV & AIDS through various best practices and innovations

Let me take this opportunity to thank all members of Team SA for making every effort to attend and participate in this conference - the world's largest forum on HIV and AIDS, a festival of ideas in the fight against the spread of new HIV infections and successful management of HIV positive patients to live a long and healthy life.

I urge everyone one of us to rally behind and mobilise audience for every satellite session where one of our own is either facilitating or presenting.

Let me also extend take this opportunity to congratulate one of our key stakeholders - **Ritshidze Project** who were amongst the global recipients of PEPFAR`s Civil Society Partnership Award yesterday during the awards ceremony to recognise teams or individuals for doing critical, life-saving work to respond to and end GBV, especially for those who remain disproportionately impacted by violence.

Ritshidze means “***Saving Our lives***” in Tshivenda, and it was established by and they represent people living with HIV and activists to hold the South African government and aids agencies accountable to improve HIV & TB service delivery.

Indeed their noise doesn`t fall into deaf ears, and they really deserve this award because they keep us on our toes like a watchdog. I don`t how many times they alerted us about challenges posing a threat to access to health services at community level.

I believe my colleagues the MECs for Health and Premier Tsipane will continue to give them and other stakeholders in the sector a special and urgent attention whenever they seek our audience because they are the eyes and ears on the community level.

Let me remind everyone that we are here to share our best practices and innovations with the rest of the world as far as the fight against HIV/AIDS and other pandemics and epidemics is concerned, and let`s go there and represent our country with pride, just like Banyana-Banyana.

I thank you