

**The 6th annual World Aids Day Gala Concert
Hosted by Stellenbosch University's Africa Centre for HIV/Aids Management,
at the Artscape Opera House, Cape Town, 1 December 2010**

**Address by Professor H Russel Botman,
Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Stellenbosch University**

Dankie Soli! Good evening, molweni, goeienaand dames en here. Dis fantasties om almal van julle hier te sien. Die goeie opkoms is 'n aanduiding van die steun wat die stryd teen MIV/vigs geniet, en dit gee mens hoop vir die toekoms.

The organisers of tonight's Gala Concert, the Africa Centre for HIV/Aids Management, forms part of Stellenbosch University's new HOPE Project. It is essentially an ambitious campaign to ensure that we make a difference where it matters most – by using the best science to address some of society's biggest challenges.

The Africa Centre for HIV/Aids Management, which is headed up by Professor Jan du Toit, is the largest programme of its kind in the world. It offers postgraduate programmes and conducts relevant research. Since 2001, more than 3000 people from 45 countries have graduated from the Centre – most of them from Africa.

Die Sentrum reik ook uit na die gemeenskap deur middel van opvoedkundige teaterstukke wat humor gebruik om die boodskap oor te dra. Die teikengehoor is plaaswerkers in die Boland en elders in die Wes-Kaap – mense wat diep in die platteland werk en dikwels buite bereik van hoofstroom-bewusmakingsveldtogte is.

More than half a million people have so far attended the Centre's educational plays – 82% of whom got to know their HIV status thanks to the fact that health workers go along to the shows and members of the audience are encouraged to be tested on the spot. The driving force behind these initiatives has been the director of tonight's Gala Concert, Professor Jimmy Earl Perry, who is also the first UNAIDS Special Goodwill Ambassador to South Africa.

Now, Stellenbosch University also contributes in other ways to the fight against HIV and Aids. A good example is the cutting-edge and world-leading research conducted in our Faculty of Health Sciences, which includes invaluable work on the TB and HIV co-epidemic.

Another example is the work being done by our Office for Institutional HIV Co-ordination in terms of HIV prevention, education and service delivery to students and staff. Our vision as a university is to be free of new HIV infections by 2012.

Higher education institutions are well-placed to be of service to society. That is why we are working hard to be relevant to the needs of the community. The HOPE Project came about when we analysed international and local development agendas and distilled five themes to guide our teaching and learning, our research and our community interaction.

We are convinced that if we work to (1) eradication of poverty and related conditions, and promote (2) human dignity and health, (3) democracy and human rights, (4) peace and security;

as well as (5) a sustainable environment and a competitive industry, we would have helped to make the world a better place for all.

It is important for those who share this vision to work together. The National Religious Association for Social Development (NRASD) falls into this category. The NRASD and the Africa Centre for HIV/Aids Management are partners in administering a recent allocation to South Africa by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Roughly USD37 million – or ZAR260 million – over five years have been allocated. This will boost local efforts tremendously.

The New Apostolic Church Cape is a partner of our Africa Centre for HIV/Aids Management, and their Choir and Orchestra are performing here tonight.

Kerke en godsdiengroep is belangrik, want hulle kan help om die regte boodskap by hul miljoene lidmate uit te kry. Hulle verskaf ook steun en hulp aan mense wat met MIV en vigs saamleef, sowel as diene wat daardeur geraak word, byvoorbeeld die magdom kinders wat wees gelaat is deur die pandemie.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have lots to celebrate in South Africa despite the fact that we have the largest number of HIV-positive people in the world.

After a slow start, our government has rolled out a massive programme to make antiretroviral drugs available so that infection is no longer automatically considered a death sentence.

One of the challenges is to ensure that people stay on the programme, and in this regard important work is being done by the Treatment Action Campaign and others. An inspirational example is a programme in Kayelitsha not far from here whereby those taking antiretroviral drugs are paired with a buddy to help them stick to the regimen.

Doing whatever we can to make a difference is very important in the fight against HIV/Aids.

And not just on World Aids Day, but every day, wherever we go – in our homes and communities, our workplaces and places of worship, our schools and universities.

As ons hierdie oorlog wil wen, moet ons die stryd elke dag stry – sonder ophou. Uiteraard verwelkom ons goeie nuus, soos die onlangse aanduidings dat die koers van mense wat MIV opdoen wêreldwyd afgeneem en die gebruik van kondome toegeneem het. Die afleiding is dat die bewusmakingsveldtogte werk, dat die boodskap deurdring. Maar as ons nou slap lê, maak ons al die harde werk tot dusver ongedaan.

We salute our heroes – those living with HIV and Aids, those fighting the disease, those contributing their time and money to the battle, which is far from over; and those taking a stand against discrimination and stigmatisation. They have demonstrated that it is possible to make a meaningful difference. It is up to all of us to follow their lead.

Thank you.