Thursday 21st July 2016

SENTEBALE’S FOUNDING PATRON, PRINCE HARRY, AND SIR ELTON JOHN SPEAK OUT ABOUT EMPOWERING YOUTH AT THE INTERNATIONAL AIDS CONFERENCE IN DURBAN

- ON THURSDAY 21ST JULY 2016, PRINCE HARRY AND SIR ELTON JOHN JOINED A PANEL OF YOUNG ADVOCATES IN A SPECIAL SESSION ABOUT THE ISSUES FACING YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV, AND HOW YOUNG PEOPLE CAN BE THE GENERATION TO END AIDS
- PRINCE HARRY AND PRINCE SESSIO ATTENDED THE SENTEBALE GLOBAL VILLAGE SESSION, WHICH SHOWCASED THE CHARITY’S WORK IN DELIVERING PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT FOR ADOLESCENTS LIVING WITH HIV
- PRINCE HARRY AND PRINCE SEEISO MET WITH YOUNG ADVOCATES AND GLOBAL LEADERS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HIV AND AIDS

Today, Prince Harry took to the stage for a special lunchtime session at the 21st International AIDS Conference in Durban. The session was to raise awareness of the issues faced by young people living with HIV, particularly those adolescents living in sub-Saharan Africa.

Prince Harry, representing his charity Sentebale, was joined by Sir Elton John, representing his charity the Elton John AIDS Foundation. Together, they spoke of the impact stigma and discrimination have on youth living with HIV. They were joined for the session by a panel of young advocates – Loyce Maturu, Carlo Oliveras and Brian Ssensalire – who discussed the HIV response among young people, and what needs to change to truly address the needs of youth with HIV. During the session named “Ending AIDS with the Voices of Youth”, Sir Elton said;

“Young people are being left out and left behind in the AIDS response and it needs to stop. It needs to stop here and now.”

Prince Harry called on today’s youth to be the generation to end AIDS;

“It is time for a new generation of leaders to step forward. It is time for us to step up to make sure no young person feels any shame in asking for an HIV test. It is time for us to step up to make sure that girls and boys with HIV aren’t kept from playing with their friends, classmates, and neighbours. It is time for us to step up and acknowledge that stigma and discrimination still act as the greatest barrier to our ability to defeat this disease once and for all.”
The special session was moderated by Kgomotso Matsunyane (South African director, writer and activist) and was introduced by Prince Seeiso, co-founding patron of Sentebale, who explained the situation in Lesotho, a small, landlocked country with the world’s second highest HIV infection rate. Prince Seeiso said:

“UNAIDS reports that there are an estimated 21,000 10 to 19 year olds living with HIV in Lesotho and only 30% of them accessing treatment. Stigma remains the main reason youth fail to access medication. It is our ambition to change the tide of this epidemic by ensuring more young people know their status, access treatment and are empowered to play there part in bringing the AIDS epidemic to an end.”

Prince Harry and Prince Seeiso spent the morning together at the conference, taking time to visit Sentebale’s Global Village session about the model of psychosocial support the charity provides to adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa. They observed as the Sentebale staff and youth volunteers explained how residential camps, monthly Saturday clubs and caregiver days help educate families and communities on supporting young people in their care with HIV. The delegates were invited to take part in an activity about identifying their circle of supporters, normally delivered to the children at a camp. This activity is one of many which help youth to understand how to cope with their virus and encourage peer-to-peer communication about HIV.

Camp is currently being delivered for adolescents living with HIV in Lesotho at the newly-built ‘Mamohato Children’s Centre. Prince Harry and Prince Seeiso visited Sentebale’s projects in Lesotho earlier this week, and took part in some of the camp activities with the children there.

On their tour of the Durban AIDS Conference, Prince Harry and Prince Seeiso met with IAS youth ambassadors before stopping to sign the UNAIDS ProTEST HIV wall with Sir Elton John to encourage young people to address the stigma around HIV testing and encourage them to know their status.

Prince Harry and Sir Elton John were also interviewed by young journalists from the Children’s Radio Foundation. The Children’s Radio Foundation is a platform to amplify youth voices across Africa. With seven million listeners weekly, young people are shown that what they have to say does matter. Prince Harry said; “The most important thing is being able to give young people a voice,” and emphasised the
importance of listening when young people speak. Elton John said, “You are the future of the world.”

As well as spending time with the Sentebale volunteers and other young advocates, Prince Harry and Prince Seeiso attended official meetings with leaders at the conference, including Mark Dybul, CEO of The Global Fund, and Ambassador Deborah Brix, US Global AIDS Coordinator and Head of PEPFAR.

This is the latest in a recent upsurge of advocacy work Prince Harry has undertaken to raise awareness of issues surrounding HIV/AIDS. Last week, he took an HIV test at Guys and St. Thomas’ Hospital, London, to show how easy it is to get tested, and at the end of June, took part in the Sentebale Concert at Kensington Palace, London, headlined by Coldplay. The aim of this work is to get AIDS back on the public agenda and encourage the world to speak out against the stigma towards those living with HIV.

-ENDS-
Notes to editors

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For links to images/content please use the below:
http://aids2016.smugmug.com/
http://crowd360.org/aids2016/
https://www.youtube.com/user/iasaidsconference
https://twitter.com/Sentebale
https://www.facebook.com/TheBritishMonarchy/
https://www.facebook.com/InternationalAIDSConference/posts/1476540505694094

About Sentebale www.sentebale.org
Sentebale is a charity co-founded by Prince Harry and Prince Seeiso of Lesotho – a country bordered by South Africa. Prince Harry visited Lesotho in 2004 and was struck by the devastating effect the HIV/AIDS epidemic was having on the nation and particularly its children. Prince Harry and Prince Seeiso founded Sentebale, meaning ‘forget me not’ in Sesotho in 2006 – a charity aiming to rewrite the future for the impoverished population of Lesotho, providing the thousands of children and young people affected by HIV/AIDS with vital access to accommodation, care, education and critically psychosocial support.

About the Durban AIDS Conference
The International AIDS Conference first convened during the peak of the epidemic in 1985, the largest conference on any global health or development issues in the world. Returning to Durban for a second time since 2000 underscoring the magnitude of the epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa. The conference continues to provide a unique forum for stakeholders to discuss where we are in the fight against AIDS, what we have learned, and how we move forward. Scientists, activists, policymakers and advocates working on HIV/AIDS will attend.

Additional information from the UNAIDS 2016 Global Aids Update
Since the first global treatment target was set in 2003, annual AIDS-related deaths have fallen by 43 per cent and there has been a 26 per cent decline since 2010, from 1.5m deaths to 1.1m but huge challenges lie ahead. In 2015 there were 2.1m new HIV infections worldwide, adding up to a total of 36.7m people living with HIV. In 2015, 72 countries have laws allowing for HIV criminalisation. HIV remains the number one cause of death amongst adolescents living in Africa.

Additional Information on the other activities
https://www.facebook.com/protesthiv/
http://www.iasociety.org/Youth-Voices/About-Youth-Voices
http://www.childrensradiofoundation.org
http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/
http://www.pepfar.gov