Chairperson,
I wish to thank you for this opportunity for us in the Commission on HIV/AIDS and Governance in Africa to attend the plenary session of the Africa Development Forum devoted to issues relating to challenges of HIV/AIDS in Africa.

This is a most welcome opportunity for the members of our commission to interact with our Ministers of Finance in order to bring to their attention the commission's work. I believe that it is extremely important for us to work closely with our policy makers because Africa is facing a crisis with frightening implications on populations. A crisis, which I feel, should be declared as an emergency requiring extraordinary and urgent measures to address; a crisis that not only needs the urgent attention of our Governments but more importantly, their commitment to act. Indeed, I sincerely believe that the AIDS epidemic in Sub-Saharan Africa should be enough reason to compel our leaders to do what is right in the fight against the disease. For this pandemic has already taken millions of our people especially
the young ones in the prime of their lives. And many more are living with HIV/AIDS.

Chair person,

On the opening day of the Commission’s work, we listened to important presentations on various aspects relating to the fight against HIV/AIDS. Yes, the presentations gave us food for thought in our continuing deliberations. And I thank the presenters for their in-depth analysis of the challenges we are facing in Africa in the fight against the AIDS pandemic.

It is now about 20 years since the first cases of AIDS were diagnosed. While it is important to note the fact that some progress has been made in methods of treatment and provision of care to patients, a lot needs to be done especially in reaching the people in our rural areas. Hence, the need for focused partnerships between Governments and other stakeholders, especially non-governmental organizations.

At the Maputo interactive session, the Commission recognized the need to inspire our Leaders in Africa to do more in spearheading the public awareness campaign on the dangers of HIV/AIDS and to take appropriate measures relating to treatment. The involvement of political leaders is important because people do listen to what they say.
I wish in this regard to share with you an underlying motivation for my commitment to the fight against HIV/AIDS. When I was still in office as President of the Republic of Zambia, I lost my son in December 1986 due to an AIDS related illness. At that time, there was not so much known about this disease as we know today. As such, there was so much stigma against AIDS patients. I realized that if we had to make progress in the fight against AIDS, there was need at high political level to provide leadership to encourage openness in dealing with people infected with the disease. I viewed this to be important in order to break the wall of silence, which was mainly due to stigmatization as AIDS was viewed to be a disease of shame.

Chairperson,
I wish to stress the fact that I believed then, as I still do today, that if we succeeded in breaking the wall of silence, many infected people would be encouraged to come out in open and seek medical treatment and our doctors would learn more about the disease for the good of humanity. With this objective in mind, my wife and I decided to make public the cause of the death of our son. I convened a press conference at which I announced that my son had died of AIDS. Many people did not understand why my wife and I decided to announce publicly the cause of our son's death. But for us, this was an attempt to help remove the myth surrounding HIV/AIDS among our people.
I have also taken an initiative to encourage people to go for voluntary testing so that they can know their status. In 2002, took an HIV test after which, I publicly announced the results, which were negative.

But I said that even if I had been found to be HIV positive, I would still have made it public and used that status in the fight against this pandemic. I'm glad to mention that since then, the issue of stigma is becoming less of an issue and that there are many Zambians who are going for voluntary testing. As you are aware, this is important so that those who are found to be HIV positive would be counseled on how to live positively and those that are negative are given the necessary information on prevention.

Chairperson,

Sub-Saharan Africa is the most affected Region in the world in terms of infections and loss of lives. This sad reality has had a negative impact on Governments' in this Region to deliver services to communities due to loss of skilled manpower. There is no sector that has been spared by the AIDS pandemic. The Civil Service, the Health Sector, Education, Agriculture and the Mining Industry are few to mention but have all been affected.

I wish, in this regard, to briefly illustrate this point by giving you a brief account of our experience in Zambia. At independence in 1964, the country had produced only 100
university graduates after 70 years of British rule. Of these, only 3 were medical doctors. We realized that we needed to develop our manpower in order for the country to attain the capacity to develop. To cut a long story short, by the time I was leaving office in 1991, we had produced about 35,000 university graduates. But unfortunately, we have since then, lost many of these young women and men who we trained at great cost, to AIDS. In view of the critical contribution these people were making to national development, there can be no doubt that this loss, has seriously impaired the capacity of Government to provide the necessary economic and social services in many sectors of national development.

In view of the foregoing, there is an urgent need for close partnership among the stakeholders involved in this fight. This means that Governments need to work closely with non-governmental organizations in order to develop effective strategies for combating HIV/AIDS. We need to look at critical strategies, which can help us to keep the infected to live longer and to help those that are not infected to remain that way. I have noted with keen interest, that several speakers in the Commission have spoken on the importance of nutrition in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

I wish in this regard to request this Commission to look at this issue seriously as it is a critical factor in the management of HIV/AIDS. I must confess that references to nutrition, in the fight against HIV/AIDS have re-
enforced what our researchers at the clinic have also concluded. This clinic operates under the auspices of the organization I established in 2000: known as, Kenneth Kaunda Children of Africa Foundation. The researchers have noted the remarkable role nutrition plays in helping patients on ARV's to get better. This is an important discovery, which should be pursued aggressively.

With regard to treatment, African Governments do not have the capacity to sustain treatment programs at national level. They need the support and assistance of the international community in order to be able to scale-up treatment programs in a sustainable manner. I wish, in this regard, to appeal to our Governments in Africa to commit some financial resources to fight against the AIDS pandemic and strive to attain the capacity to implement the programmes for prevention, treatment and care. To be effective, our Governments need to work with other important players such as Non-Governmental Organizations. This should be done with the participation of the people not only at national level but also at district and local levels. This would enhance not only the availability of drugs but also accessibility. This is a challenge, which our Governments need to take seriously in the interest of scaling-up treatment programs in our countries.

Chair person,
As we do have experts in this field among us, I do not need to speak at length. I wish in conclusion to appeal to our
leaders in Government to look at the recommendations of this Group when they are published and to consider incorporating them in their national programs and to allocate more resources to the fight against HIV/AIDS. But this may not do the trick unless Governments are willing and ready to implement the programs they draw-up.

Let me also mention that as an old freedom fighter, I am obliged to urge our Governments to wage a relentless fight against HIV/AIDS with similar vigor and determination, which characterized the struggle against colonialism and apartheid. I sincerely believe that given the adverse impact of Africa's capacity to govern, our leaders will rise to the occasion and do what is right to help reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS. We will need to work together through networking mechanisms in order to learn from each other's experiences for the good of our people. We must do everything possible to conquer AIDS.

I thank you for your attention.