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Leadership and Investment in Fighting an Epidemic (LIFE) [Initiative] Tour

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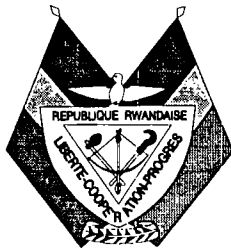
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T-Rwanda
Life tar

REPUBLIQUE RWANDAISE



MINISTRE DE LA SANTE
B.P 84 - KIGALI.

Kigali, March 17, 2000

N° 20/ 401/SG.I.1/2000

Ms Sandra Thurman
Director, White House Office of National AIDS Policy
Washington D.C.

Dear Madam,

RE : Your visit to Rwanda.

I would like to thank you for having completed a successful Life Initiative Implementation tour in Africa. Your visit to Rwanda restored hope to the Rwandans, particularly those affected by HIV/AIDS, through the realisation that they have friends somewhere who care for their wellbeing. We greatly appreciate your interest in assisting the disadvantaged, and developing countries in general, and those living with HIV/AIDS in particular.

On behalf of my government, my peoples' and my own behalf, I would like to thank you for having accepted my invitation to you to visit Rwanda. Your visit to Rwanda, accompanied by a delegation of distinguished personalities, experienced in population issues in general and AIDS in particular, offered us an otherwise rare chance of sharing, in a field setting, our problems, experiences, successes and frustrations with a team that has an international exposure. Please accept to pass on our heart-felt gratitude to all members of your delegation. I would especially like to thank Ms Mary Fisher for her sensitivity towards people in suffering in general and those affected by HIV/AIDS in particular. Her testimony healed the souls of many suffering Rwandan men and women; it proved to the populace that HIV/AIDS is not the end of the world, that there is always hope and that one can remain very useful even when infected with HIV/AIDS. This hope is particularly important in a country like Rwanda where over 11% of the general population is infected with HIV and where the infection rate in certain groups exceeds 30%.

Your visit, the longest by an American diplomat since the 1994 catastrophe, had such a soothing effect on our traumatised population that it became a topic of special interest for many days after your departure. This shows that not only was your visit highly appreciated in the political and technical circles, but also in the lives of the ordinary Rwandans whose well-being we are all striving to improve. We appreciate you for having set aside time to visit one of our genocide sites, in spite of a very tight schedule. When one hears, one may doubt and forget; but when one sees as you indeed did, then the truth becomes more real. The genocide that took place in Rwanda has left its mark on the lives of many Rwandans; which mark is manifest in the increasing HIV/AIDS infection, rape and defilement etc. All these factors aggravate the already serious problem of HIV/AIDS in the country.

We would like to thank the White House for its donation of USD 4,5 million towards the fight against AIDS in Rwanda, and President Bill Clinton's donation towards the genocide survivors' fund. Please accept to present our appreciation to your government and President Bill Clinton for these donations and other donations made to Rwanda earlier in the effort of fostering its recovery from Genocide and its effects. We hope that the brotherly ties existing between our two countries will be nurtured and encouraged to grow to even greater heights for the benefit of our peoples.

I wish you good health and success in your crusade to diminish HIV/AIDS related sufferance.

Yours sincerely,

The Minister of Health,

Dr. Ezéchias RWABUHIHI.



C.C.:

- His Excellency the President of the Republic of Rwanda
KIGALI.
- His Excellency the Vice-President and Minister of Defense
KIGALI.
- His Excellency the Speaker of the National Transitional
Assembly
KIGALI.
- His Excellency the Ambassador of Rwanda in USA
Washington D.C.

LIFE
TALK

Tom: here is my first crack at a cable to the field. I would intend to send action to the Sub-Saharan labor officers and info to the rest. Would welcome your wordsmithing and additional ideas including major shifts as you see necessary. (Will it need a White House clearance?)
Ed

1. **SUMMARY/INTRODUCTION:** ON JULY 19, VICE PRESIDENT GORE ANNOUNCED ON BEHALF OF THE ADMINISTRATION A USD 100 MILLION GLOBAL AIDS PREVENTION AND TREATMENT INITIATIVE. MORE THAN TWO-THIRDS OF THE FUNDING IS TO BE SPENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA WHERE AIDS IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH. THIS INITIATIVE WILL PURSUE A VARIETY OF STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHALLENGING OTHER PARTNERS, INCLUDING LABOR, TO JOIN IN AN ENHANCED EFFORT. SPECIFICALLY REGARDING LABOR, THIS INITIATIVE ENVISAGES ASSISTING LABOR ORGANIZATIONS IN EDUCATING THEIR MEMBERS AND SECURING COMMITMENTS TO DEVELOP WORKPLACE-BASED AIDS EDUCATION AND PREVENTION PROGRAMS, INCLUDING OUTREACH TO YOUTH. THIS MESSAGE IS INTENDED TO INFORM/UPDATE LABOR OFFICERS SERVING IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA REGARDING THIS INITIATIVE AND TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN ENSURING ITS SUCCESS THROUGH USE OF LABOFF'S TIES WITH LABOR IN HIS/HER HOST COUNTRY.
2. WHILE THIS PROGRAM INITIALLY IS TARGETED AT SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA, LABOR OFFICERS SERVING IN COUNTRIES OUTSIDE OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA IN COUNTRIES WHICH FACE SERIOUS AIDS PROBLEMS ARE ENCOURAGED TO COMMENT ON THE POSSIBILITY OF EXTENDING SUCH AN INITIATIVE TO THEIR COUNTRY. WHILE LABOFFS OUTSIDE OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA MAY WISH TO DISCUSS THIS INITIATIVE INFORMALLY WITH HOST GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, LABOR REPRESENTATIVES, AFL-CIO SOLIDARITY CENTERS WHERE THEY EXIST AND OTHERS, IT SHOULD BE MADE CLEAR THAT THERE ARE NO CURRENT PLANS TO EXTEND THIS INITIATIVE TO THAT COUNTRY. IN GENERAL, THE DEPARTMENT WOULD BE INTERESTED IN KNOWING THE EXTENT OF LIKELY HOST COUNTRY (GOVERNMENT, LABOR AND MANAGEMENT) RECEPTIVITY TO SUCH AN INITIATIVE, SPECIFICALLY TO INCLUDE THE ROLE OF LABOR AS A PARTNER IN SUCH AN INITIATIVE. END
SUMMARY/INTRODUCTION.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE INITIATIVE:

3. THE ADMINISTRATION HAS PLEDGED TO COMMIT USD 100 MILLION IN FY2000 TO THE GLOBAL BATTLE AGAINST AIDS. MOST OF THE INITIATIVE WILL FOCUS ON SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA. THIS INITIATIVE WILL PROVIDE FOR:

- USD 48 MILLION TO CONTAIN THE AIDS PANDEMIC BY IMPLEMENTING A VARIETY OF PREVENTION AND STIGMA REDUCTION STRATEGIES, ESPECIALLY FOR WOMEN AND YOUTH, INCLUDING: HIV EDUCATION, ENGAGEMENT OF POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS, AND OTHER LEADERS; VOLUNTARY COUNSELING AND TESTING; INTERVENTIONS TO REDUCE MOTHER-TO-CHILD TRANSMISSION (MTCT) AND ENHANCE TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE EFFORTS, INCLUDING DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EFFORTS WITH AFRICAN MILITARIES.
 - USD 23 MILLION TO PROVIDE HOME AND COMMUNITY-BASED CARE TO INCLUDE: DELIVERY OF COUNSELING, SUPPORT, PALLIATIVE AND BASIC MEDICAL CARE INCLUDING TREATMENT FOR SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES, OPPORTUNISTIC INFECTIONS (OIS), AND TUBERCULOSIS (TB) THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED CLINICS AND HOME-BASED CARE WORKERS. ENHANCE TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE EFFORTS.
 - USD 10 MILLION FOR CARE FOR CHILDREN ORPHANED BY AIDS WHICH WILL BE USED TO ASSIST FAMILIES, EXTENDED FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES IN CARING FOR THEIR CHILDREN THROUGH NUTRITIONAL ASSISTANCE, EDUCATION, TRAINING, HEALTH AND COUNSELING SUPPORT, IN COORDINATION WITH MICRO-FINANCE PROGRAMS.
 - USD 19 MILLION TO STRENGTHEN PREVENTION AND TREATMENT BY AUGMENTING PLANNING, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT SO AS TO STRENGTHEN HOST COUNTRY ABILITY TO PLAN AND IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS. THIS ASPECT OF THE INITIATIVE WILL AIM AT STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY FOR EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS AND THE ABILITY OF COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS TO DELIVER ESSENTIAL SERVICES AND TO OPERATE STRENGTHENED SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS TO INCLUDE TRACKING THE EPIDEMIC AND TARGET HIV/AIDS PROGRAMS.
4. THE COMMITMENT OF HOST COUNTRY POLITICAL LEADERS AND VARIOUS SEGMENTS OF SOCIETY ARE KEY TO THIS INITIATIVE'S SUCCESS. MOREOVER, RESOURCES PROVIDED BY THE USG NEED TO BE LEVERAGED AND COORDINATED WITH THOSE OF OTHER DONORS, THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS TO ENSURE SYNERGY AND SO AS TO MAXIMIZE THEIR IMPACT. PARTNERSHIPS WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN

SUPPORT OF EFFECTIVE ACTION AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL SHOULD, OF COURSE, INCLUDE THE LABOR SECTOR.

5. IN ORDER TO HIGHLIGHT THE ROLE OF LABOR, THE SECRETARY OF LABOR WILL FACILITATE A MEETING OF US AND AFRICAN LABOR LEADERS THAT WILL BE CO-CHAIRLED BY THE AFL-CIO. THE SUCCESS OF THE AFL-CIO AND ITS SOLIDARITY CENTER IN SOUTH AFRICA (SUPPORTED BY USAID) IN WORKING WITH THE SOUTH AFRICAN TRADE UNION FEDERATIONS TO INCLUDE AIDS AS A KEY LABOR OUTREACH AND POLICY ISSUE PROVIDES A MODEL FOR SIMILAR ACTION ELSEWHERE. OUTCOMES INCLUDE ASSISTING LABOR ORGANIZATIONS IN EDUCATING THEIR MEMBERS AND SECURING COMMITMENTS TO DEVELOP WORKPLACE-BASED AIDS EDUCATION AND PREVENTION PROGRAMS, INCLUDING OUTREACH TO YOUTH.
6. IN A JULY 19 STATEMENT, AFL-CIO PRESIDENT JOHN SWEENEY APPLAUDED THE GORE ANNOUNCEMENT AND SPECIFICALLY THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION'S INTENTION TO "OPEN A NEW FRONT ON THE INTERNATIONAL WAR AGAINST AIDS BY TAKING HIV EDUCATION AND PREVENTION MESSAGES TO WORKPLACES AROUND THE GLOBE." SWEENEY ADDED THAT, "A HEALTHY, PRODUCTIVE AND EMPOWERED WORKFORCE IS A KEY ELEMENT OF EVERY COUNTRY'S SUCCESS IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY... EDUCATION IN THE WORKPLACE OFFERS A COMMON SENSE SOLUTION ... FOR IT OFFERS ACCESS TO A LARGE PART OF THE AFFECTED POPULATION, THIS IS WHY TRADE UNIONS, AND THE WORKING MEN AND WOMEN THEY REPRESENT, CAN AND MUST PLAY A SPECIAL ROLE IN FIGHTING THE CALMITY OF THIS GLOBAL DISEASE." SWEENEY CONCLUDED BY NOTING THAT "THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION IS TO BE COMMENDED FOR RECOGNIZING THAT ANY INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY TO STEM THE RISE OF NEW HIV INFECTIONS WILL NOT SUCCEED UNLESS TRADE UNIONS AND WORKING PEOPLE ACROSS THE GLOBE ARE ENGAGED IN THE BATTLE."