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KORA Awards Statement

DRAFT

Good evening, it is a great honor to be invited to share a message with the millions of individuals around the world watching tonight's KORA Music Awards Ceremony. What a wonderful way to recognize the wealth of talented African musicians and artists. To those nominated for an award and those featured as performers, I say thank you for sharing your talent with us. You have inspired us and enriched our lives.

I am particularly pleased that tonight's ceremony is being held in collaboration with the One Billion Against AIDS Concert and its call for global solidarity in the fight against AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. We have all witnessed the devastating impact that HIV and AIDS is having in Africa and around the world. The show tonight, and the concert tomorrow, will help to raise much needed global awareness and to mobilize much needed global action. To date, more than 50 million men, women, and children have become HIV positive, and more than 15 million have died of AIDS. It is believed that by the end of this decade, more than 40 million African children will be orphaned by AIDS. And yet the pandemic rages on -- with 16,000 people becoming infected each and every day -- half of whom are teenagers and young adults.

But while the challenge before us is great -- we must not allow ourselves to be discouraged or defeated. For amidst this tragedy there is hope. As I have traveled throughout Africa, I have met countless spirited and selfless warriors in the battle against AIDS. In community after community, I have seen extraordinary examples of how we can stem the rising tide of new infections and care for those who are sick. In the face of seemingly insurmountable odds -- I have seen impressive results. Africa is blessed with boundless skill and talent -- courage and commitment. What Africa needs is real partners willing to pursue our shared vision.

It is time to fight AIDS not people with AIDS. And it is time to realize that this fight is our fight. The fight against AIDS is every world leaders fight, it is every parents fight, it is every persons fight. From the parliament to the parish and from the corporate board room to the community -- we must join forces and we must turn this tide.

Together we can break the silence on AIDS. Together we can push past denial and hopelessness -- and toward compassion, community mobilization and constructive action. Together we can save lives.

If we do, then in the eyes of our children will shine the whole of the universe -- a world that together fought AIDS and won.