



THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY
CELEBRATING 150 YEARS

CHAMPIONS
FOR AN AIDS-FREE GENERATION
IN AFRICA

COMMONWEALTH
PARLIAMENTARY
ASSOCIATION UK 

27/11/2018

PRESS RELEASE: Champions for an AIDS-Free Generation in Africa call on Commonwealth parliamentarians to ‘leave no one behind’ in the fight to eradicate HIV and AIDS

Two eminent former African Presidents, representing the Champions for an AIDS-Free Generation in Africa, have urged Commonwealth parliamentarians to ensure they ‘leave no one behind’ in the fight to eradicate HIV and AIDS. The call was made during a side-event to the Westminster Seminar 2018, organised by The Royal Commonwealth Society in partnership with the Champions for an AIDS-Free Generation in Africa and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK, with the theme ‘HIV, Inclusion & Leaving No One Behind: A Conversation with Former African Presidents’.

H.E. Festus Mogae, Former President of Botswana and Chairperson of the Champions, and H.E. Joaquim Chissano, Former President of Mozambique, spoke passionately on why securing the human rights of key populations, including sexual and gender minorities, is essential for guaranteeing the health of all and leaving no one behind. They engaged the participants in a fruitful dialogue on how stigma and discrimination against key populations continues to present a barrier to access to health services and an AIDS-free generation in Africa and beyond.

In 36 of 53 Commonwealth countries consensual same-sex acts between adults are criminalised, overwhelmingly using legislation introduced under British colonial rule. In addition to legitimising discrimination and violence, these laws represent a significant barrier to accessing health services for LGBT+ people, who face stigma in health systems where their sexual behaviour is deemed a criminal offense.

H.E. Festus Mogae said: *‘Unfortunately, barriers to access to health and HIV services still exist and they continue to fuel stigma, discrimination and violence towards marginalised groups, especially for the LGBT+ people. These barriers continue to deny us the opportunity to end AIDS.’*

H.E. Joaquim Chissano said: *‘We cannot end AIDS if some sectors of our populations are still left behind.’*

Glenroy Murray, an LGBT+ equality activist from Jamaica’s J-FLAG, a member organisation of The Commonwealth Equality Network (TCEN), also participated in the dialogue. He spoke about his advocacy efforts for inclusivity in Jamaica, and how overcoming discrimination against LGBT+ people could help reduce the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean.

He said: *‘When our legal systems fail to protect us, or worse, criminalise us, then how we seek to navigate public spaces, and public health spaces in particular, becomes more challenging. LGBT+ people, wherever*

they are, should feel confident in knowing that they can walk into any public health space and be open about their health issues, without fear of discrimination or condemnation.'

The discussion was chaired by Dr Greg Munro, Chief Executive of The Royal Commonwealth Society, who has wide international experience working on HIV/AIDS, including with the International HIV/AIDS Alliance and UNAIDS.

He said: *'The Royal Commonwealth Society strongly believes that in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, eradicate HIV/AIDS, and leave no one behind, we must have honest and frank discussions about the rights of LGBT+ people. The Society is delighted to continue our work promoting these discussions, by welcoming Their Excellencies Festus Mogae and Joaquim Chissano to London to foster respectful dialogue and support their bold leadership on this issue of critical importance.'*

- ENDS -

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Champions for an AIDS-Free Generation in Africa

The Champions for an AIDS-Free Generation is a distinguished group of former presidents and influential African leaders committed to an AIDS-free generation. Individually and collectively the Champions rally and support regional leaders towards ending the AIDS epidemic as a public health threat. The Champions transcend political partisanship to speak freely and independently about the issues that need solutions, both publicly and behind the scenes.

<http://www.aidsfreechampions.org/about/>

Twitter: @AIDSFreeChamps

Facebook: Aids Free Champions

For more information about the Champions for an AIDS Free Generation contact mohalem@unaids.org +26774166804

The Royal Commonwealth Society

The Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS), founded in 1868, is a network of individuals and organisations committed to improving the lives and prospects of Commonwealth citizens across the world. Through youth empowerment, education and advocacy, the RCS promotes the value and the values of the modern Commonwealth. We champion human rights, democracy and sustainable development through our international networks and across the 53 member states which are intrinsically linked through their common history and shared values.

Through membership of The Commonwealth Equality Network (TCEN) and partnerships with UK and international LGBT+ civil society organisations, the Society continues to convene high-level Champions

to build dialogue and consensus between civil society, the diplomatic community and Commonwealth governments about the need to secure equality and inclusion for LGBT+ people.

<https://thercs.org/>

Twitter: @TheRCSLondon

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Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK (CPA UK)

CPA UK is located in and funded by the UK Parliament. It supports and strengthens parliamentary democracy throughout the Commonwealth focussing on key issues including women in parliament, modern slavery, financial oversight, security and trade.

Peer to peer learning is central to CPA UK's methodology. CPA UK designs bespoke interactions between UK and Commonwealth parliamentarians and officials, enabling and facilitating knowledge-sharing to achieve improved parliamentary oversight, scrutiny and representation. CPA UK's Westminster Seminar 2018 runs from 26th-30th November 2018 in the heart of the UK Parliament and covers all aspects of parliamentary strengthening during the week long programme for over 70 Commonwealth parliamentarians and clerks.

<https://www.uk-cpa.org/>

Twitter: @CPA_UK

Facebook: @CPAUKbranch

For more information about CPA UK, please email Felicity Newall, Communications Manager, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK. **Tel:** 020 7219 1747 **E:** newallfb@parliament.uk