



DEPUTY PRESIDENT: REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X1000, Pretoria, 0001

MESSAGE BY DEPUTY PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA FOR THE LAUNCH OF 'SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER: THE STORY OF THE AIDS LAW PROJECT'

Thank you for inviting me to share with you a few thoughts as you launch this book on the AIDS Law Project.

This book describes an important chapter in the struggle against discrimination, prejudice and neglect.

It captures the relentless efforts of South Africans from all walks of life to exercise their right to life, dignity, equality and health care.

This book is a celebration of our constitutional democracy, the rule of law and the resilience of our people.

It traces our nation's difficult journey as it grappled with its response to this devastating epidemic. There were mistakes and missteps. But it was thanks to the tireless efforts of organisations like the AIDS Law Project –and many outstanding individuals – that we were able to forge a common programme to tackle HIV and AIDS.

We wish to express our deepest appreciation to the AIDS Law Project for its work in fighting discrimination of people living with HIV and AIDS in the workplace, in communities, in schools and in hospitals.

Thank you for helping to restore our dignity as a nation.

Thank you for saving lives.

We wish also to congratulate the author of this book and all those who contributed to it for having captured the story of the AIDS Law Project so warmly and vividly.

It reminds us that those infected and affected with HIV are not statistics. They are children, parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters. Some are household names. Many are unknown.

The story of the AIDS Law Project underlines the value of an active civil society. We would not have made the progress we have without the commitment, perseverance and activism of many organisations and thousands of individuals.

We now have a platform for greater collaboration and coordination between all social partners. Government, civil society, business and labour all need to shoulder their responsibility to tackle this disease.

Despite the progress we have made, we remain the country with the highest number of people living with HIV.

We must not relent in our pursuit of the goal of an AIDS-free generation.

We must continue to work together in promoting safe sex and healthy lifestyles.

Together, we must continue the fight against stigma and dispel the myths that surround the disease.

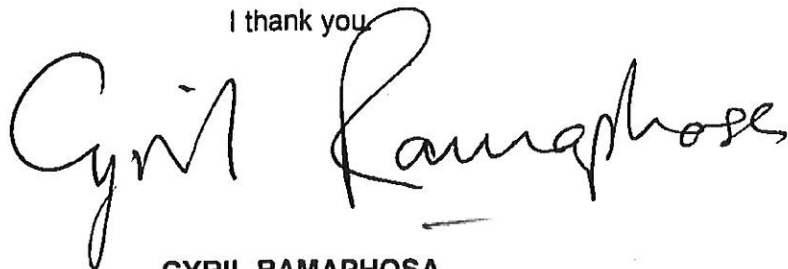
We must advance the struggle for gender equality, for that is one of the most powerful weapons we have to reduce the vulnerability of women to infection.

I am confident that those who read this rich history of the AIDS Law Project will be inspired to continue the pursuit of a just, humane and more equal society.

This book shows us how far we have come. It reminds us also of how far we still have to go.

Working together, we will move South Africa forward.

I thank you

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Cyril Ramaphosa'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Cyril' and the last name 'Ramaphosa' clearly distinguishable.

CYRIL RAMAPHOSA