

## Kenya steals the show at the AIDS 2016 Conference.



**NACC Director Dr. Nduku Kilonzo (Left) with Bill Gates-Founder and Chair of Bill AND Melinda Gates Foundation during a Special Session on Accelerating the Decline of the Burden and Incidence of HIV in Sub Saharan Africa**

Kenya's efforts to curb HIV and AIDS were lauded by different speakers at the just concluded 21<sup>st</sup> AIDS Conference in Durban South Africa. Kenya was particularly praised for being a global leader in spearheading a number of initiatives geared towards eradicating the scourge by 2030 as pledged by World leaders during United Nations High Level Meeting in New York in June 2016. With more than 120 presentations made, Kenyan delegates left a mark at the Conference that comes at a time when the world has re-committed to ending AIDS by 2030 amid shrinking resource envelope to support HIV and AIDS program implementation. Dr. Elizabeth Bukusi, a renowned researcher and Maureen Murenga a social activist made powerful presentations under the theme of 'Where we are now- Implications of Gender on the Response.' that got the world talking.

### **Bill Gates lauds Kenya's efforts in the AIDS response**

It is worth noting that during this same conference, the PROGRESS made in the HIV response in Kenya was quoted repeatedly by speakers and this information is available for verification in the [www.AIDS2016.org](http://www.AIDS2016.org) conference website for review. Two of the plenary panelists were Kenyan. During the key address of Bill Gates, he specifically made reference to the progress Kenya has made in the HIV response and engaged the Director of the National AIDS Control Council of Kenya Dr Nduku Kilonzo in a panel at a session attended by over 3,000 people. Gates however warned of the risk of stigma eroding the gains made against the scourge over time. "Now as we move forward, everything we do must include effective campaigns to counter the stigma and discrimination that continue to undermine our efforts to beat this epidemic. So the final area besides the prevention and treatment is to gain a deeper understanding of the social and cultural dynamics around this disease." Said Gates.



**Chair and Founder of Bill and Melinda Gates, Bill Gates(Right) with NACC Director Dr. Nduku Kilonzo (Left) during International AIDS Conference 2016 in Durban, South Africa.**

National AIDS Control Council Director Dr. Nduku Kilonzo in apparent admission noted that Kenya's efforts to combat the pandemic are heavily hampered by high cases of stigma and

discrimination. Singling out the rise of new infections among young people and Adolescents who currently account for 46% of total new infections Dr. Kilonzo attributed the unprecedented rise to stigma. She however said the Government and partners are determined to change the HIV narrative in the country by eradicating stigma among other strategies known to have worked. The two spoke when they met during a Special Session on Accelerating the Decline of the Burden and Incidence of HIV in Sub Saharan Africa. All the world leaders who lauded Kenya's progress in reducing new infections and putting people on treatment cannot all be wrong at the same time.

### **Kenya HIV Situation Room**

Kenya also exhibited at the Conference where the Revolutionary Kenya HIV Situation room was showcased. Launched last year the online platform is critical in providing easy access to HIV and AIDS information in the country. The UNAIDS uses the global HIV Situation room to monitor global progress, and supports national monitoring solutions to step up their efforts to reach HIV. At the country level the platform is critical for policy and decision makers involved in the fight against HIV and AIDS in tracking progress, planning and resource allocation to the response. Several countries who visited the Kenya's Situational room booth including Lesotho Minister for Health, Namibia Minister for Health, Haitian Government delegation, Botswana Minister for Health, PEPFAR, GIZ, Centre for Disease Control and Cameroon Government all of whom expressed interest in rolling out a similar system in their respective countries re affirming Kenya's role in the AIDS response at the Global stage.

The biennial International AIDS Conference is the premier meeting where science, leadership and community meet for advancing all facets of the collective efforts to treat and prevent HIV. Gathering in Durban, scientists, policymakers, world leaders, and people living with HIV discussed together successes and challenges specific to their country and the current global epidemic trends.

***A detailed brief will be shared in the July Maisha Bulletin.***