**PRESS STATEMENT BY HON ESTHER M MBAYO, MINISTER FOR THE PRESIDENCY, THE UGANDA MEDIA CENTRE - Presidential Media Campaign on Ending AIDS 2030**

Venue:

Date: 15/10/2019

Time: 10:00 am

The UNAIDS Country Director, Dr. Karusa Kiragu

Representatives of other Development Partners

The Director General Uganda AIDS Commission

Representatives of other Government Agencies

The Media Fraternity

Ladies and Gentlemen

Over the last three decades, Uganda has battled the AIDS pandemic with great success reducing HIV prevalence from a national average of 18% in the 1990s to 6% by 2016. Thanks to dedicated leadership and unwavering guidance from HE the President of Uganda from the very early days of the epidemic. However a recent review indicated that the burden is still huge with 1000 people getting newly infected with HIV and 500 people dying of AIDS related illnesses every week.

In June 2017, HE Gen. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, the President of the Republic of Uganda therefore launched the Presidential Fast Track Initiative to end AIDS as a Public Health threat by 2030 in an effort to reinvigorate national efforts especially HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness efforts. Over the past two years, Uganda AIDS Commission has been coordinating this Initiative and a recent review shows that we are on course to achieve the UNAIDS targets of 90-90-90.

During the launch, the President expressed concern about the way HIV/AIDS messaging and communication has been confusing and misinforming the public. Correct and consistent messaging on preventing and managing HIV and AIDS should be at the core of all our interventions. We know that the absence of a proper message negates all our interventions and will significantly slow our efforts of ending AIDS by 2030.

It is against this background that His Excellency President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni has provided a set of public awareness HIV and AIDS messages that are meant to contribute to ongoing efforts in ensuring that the country is able to meet our Global Targets of ending AIDS as a Public Health Threat by 2030. The messages cover a range of HV/AIDS themes and are going to be broadcast on a number of media platforms including television and radio stations throughout the country. Some of the themes that the President addresses include “Young people and HIV”, “HIV testing”, “Getting Men to embrace testing” and safer health care life styles”, Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission”, “Importance of the Test and Treat”, “sustainability of the HIV/AIDS response including Institutional effectiveness”.

His Excellency President, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni is challenging all of us to simplify the HIV/AIDS prevention messages. He calls upon all of us to refocus the message; understanding how HIV is transmitted and therefore avoiding getting infected with HIV; we need to constantly remind our people that HIV is still with us, has no cure and that everyone should do whatever they can to avoid it.

The President is reminding us that the main causes of HIV are known and therefore it can easily be avoided by observing some simple behavioral aspects such as: delaying sex especially for young people until one is of age and ready for consequences of sex, being faithful to each other for adults who are in consenting relationships, The other aspect that the President emphasizes is that of testing and treatment. Science has shown that when you test for HIV and you are positive there are benefits if you start on treatment immediately even if you don’t feel unwell, take your drugs properly and consistently. That way you will be able to reduce on the virus in your body considerably to the extent that you do not transmit to your partner and also carry on with your work normally. However, the availability of drugs should not be an open invitation for complacency. We need to understand that taking ARVs is burdensome, goes on for life and sometimes may come with side effects. ARVs are not a cure for HIV but only provide relief.

His Excellence the President, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni therefore calls upon all stakeholders, including media houses to embrace and support the presidential information campaign on HIV/AIDS communication. The campaign will go on consistently for the next one year and I count on everyone’s support to ensure that we achieve our objective of ending AIDS by 2030.

It is now my honor and privilege to launch this campaign one Public Service announcement as an example of the HIV Prevention messages that has been provided by the President.

For God and My Country

Esther M. Mbayo (MP)

**Minister in Charge, Office of the President**