**2017 Human Rights Council Social Forum**

**Panel 6: Building synergies for health: engaging diverse partners**

**Keynote by Mr. Kenneth Cole, UNAIDS International Goodwill Ambassador and Chair of the Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR)**

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

It’s an honor, privilege to be here amongst this esteemed panel and in this important place and this important time.

The notion of addressing human rights and relationship to social justice and public health with a nod to expose private and public sector implications is significant. And to be here and to be part of it is an honor.

These are very fragile times, not just in the United States but everywhere, and it’s hard not to take these issues and so many others very very seriously at this point in time. I do believe in a public global AIDS response we have come very very far in the last 30 years. I did my first AIDS awareness campaign in 1985, I joined the board of amfAR in 1987, and to see how far we have come in this journey is very impressive. But as I often say, in amfAR we’ve come far but we are far from where we still need to be, and I think that especially with regards to human rights and social justice that it is no more real than it is here and in this specific conversation. It is clear and I think most of you would agree that if we are not aligned on the notion of basic fundamental rights, however far we’ve come in this journey, we’re not going to finish it. And people can’t be left behind; the marginalized and vulnerable populations at the end of the day will determine how successful we have been. And we’ll only be as far and be only as successful as the least accessible and those with the least resources amongst this are empowered and enabled. People have often asked me if there is a general role of business in this discussion, and does business in community really intersect and connect, and to which I’ve always responded that they not relate but in fact they are interrelated, and not only they connect but they are interconnected. And I don’t think today either can exist without the other, I think they are the proverbial hand that feeds each other, and I think the healthy community will ensure the healthy business community and I think they become even more and more critical. The common denominator to large degree in this journey that we are on and in mine has been the impact and the effect of stigma in the discussion and in our various efforts. And I do believe that arguably stigma has killed more people than the HIV virus has itself, and I think at its roots is intolerance and discrimination. And I feel that everybody today has a voice in this universe of social media, everybody today has the ability today to find platform and to be heard, which makes it even more important that we recognize that minorities can’t be silenced and that social justice is not negotiable.

The notion of synergies which I know is the basis of this gathering is something that has always been important to me. And we all have limited resources and it’s critical that we find ways to connect them and to leverage them. I have brought my sense of humility, my sense of activism to my business, and I believe at the end of the day that they are both better for it. I was a chairmen of amfAR and I still am, for the last 30 years amfAR played a very significant role in the progress that we’ve made, and the research has been done in regard to people living with AIDS, and we played the role in most of the major breakthroughs over the last 15 to 20 years. And interestingly, when I was afforded the privilege to come to UNAIDS, it became very apparent and the value added in the synergies was significant. UNAIDS put forth the decoration to end ages of public health crisis by 2030, amfAR has at the roots of its mission now is to find a functional cure by 2020. The reality is that most people feel it’s going to take 10 years from when you find the cure to further produce it, deliver it, and realize the desirable outcomes. But I’m not so sure that 2020 is a realistic date, but at the end of the day it’s the business community that is going to accelerate the supply chain and create the efficiency and the necessary outcomes to still enable the 2030 deadline.

The private sector… In my business, in my fashion business I’ve believed wholeheartedly that what one stands in is not as important as what one stands for, and that if I am afforded the privilege to speak to people about not just what is on their body but what is on their mind, then I’ve elevated that my relationship in a far significant way than I could have ever dreamt and hoped for.

What we bring and what I have looked to bring and what the business community brings to this discussion, which I believe is critical, our efficiency as economies and a culture of change that is critical. In the business community you succeed, you grow, they say, or you go. That does not typically exist in all communities. But the notion of accountability, I do believe, is very important, as we commence upon this next and hopefully the final chapter. We have less resources today than we’ve had and it’s anticipated we’ll have less tomorrow than today. We need to figure out how to go twice as far with half as much. And with all these innovations happening in all sectors it’s not an unrealistic notion, although still ambitious. We need to leverage the resources we have, the financial resources obviously, but also the intellectual, the scientific and the creative resources.

The ADS response has evolved into several silos, necessarily, and it’s within those silos that leverage and efficiency have been created up until now. The next chapter those silos have to be broken down, walls need to come down, and bridges need to be created. And there needs to be collaboration, coordination and cooperation across sectors if we are going to get to that final important critical step. And we are very focused in the formation of an End AIDS Coalition which we’ve looked to create that mechanism where the vary sectors can be informed and they can be empowered and they can collaborate with each other and benefit from the results thereof. And the narrative needs to be refreshed, AIDS needs to be brought front and center once again, people need to understand that there are still million people a year dying of AIDS, that’s what the Coalition is intent on doing.

I believe at the end, as I said, I used to say that we aren’t far; I don’t think we are not as far as we used to be regarding finding this cure. I do believe we will make AIDS history, if we all cooperate, collaborate, communicate and we are aligned. And at the end of the day, as I told my friend Michel Sidibé, “Michel, I believe our goal is to end AIDS”, as he is inherent in the title of this organization.

I’m happy to be here and I appreciate being here and I thank you for this opportunity to speak to you and I turn this back over to the chairman. Thank you.