



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

31 May 2001

Dear Mr. Mutombo,

I am writing to you about an issue to which I attach the highest priority -- the global fight against HIV/AIDS.

The AIDS epidemic has become the greatest public health challenge of our time. It is devastating the lives of more than 36 million people who are infected, as well as the lives of their families. Increasingly, especially in Africa, it is tearing apart the fabric of communities and even countries. The Member States of the United Nations recognize the need for a response commensurate with the scale of this crisis. A Special Session of the UN General Assembly will be held in New York from 25 to 27 June to consider urgent action to improve prevention, education, care and treatment—and to increase funding for all of these.

Encouraging the active participation of all partners in the fight against AIDS has become my personal priority. Many celebrities and prominent individuals are already actively engaged in that fight. Today, I appeal to each of you to join your voice with mine and with those of all who are engaged in this global mission. Around the world, you and others like you have a direct influence on enormous numbers of people. The young are a critically important audience. They can change the future course of the AIDS epidemic through their own behaviour. Your message can have special significance for young people eager to model their own lives on those of their "heroes".

As a Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations Development Programme, I appeal to you to help us keep the fight against AIDS in the spotlight worldwide. Enclosed is some basic information on the AIDS pandemic and on the role of the United Nations in mobilizing the global community against it. I hope that you will keep this information in mind during your media encounters and in your public appearances.

Mr. Dikembe Mutombo  
Dikembe Mutombo Foundation  
Marietta

I urge you to encourage others to join forces with the United Nations in the fight against HIV/AIDS at this critical time. I am asking the heads of the United Nations offices, funds and programmes you may already be working with to explore how we can make our collaboration in the campaign against HIV/AIDS even more effective. I hope you will respond favourably to their proposals, and that you will not hesitate to come forward with your own ideas and suggestions.

With appreciation for your continued support of the United Nations,

Yours sincerely,



~ Kofi A. Annan