

**20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Stephen Lewis Foundation with Solidarity Quilt at  
Canadian Museum for Human Rights**

**October 27, 2023**

**Closing speech – Robin Scobie**

Good evening everyone,

I am delighted and honoured to be one of many grandmothers here.

In her community, a grandmother is like a tree with her arms as outstretched branches providing shelter for saplings and new growth, and her roots running deep into the heart of her community. Together we are a forest that sustains the world.

We are grandmothers and grandmothers who came together this week for three inspiring days at our International Grandmothers Gathering here at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. Together we have strengthened our commitment to a future free from AIDS.

As members of the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign, we have created an unprecedented solidarity movement with African grandmothers. Powerful connections have grown from and within this community of women whose leadership continues to be at the forefront of change, in Canada and on the African continent.

In 2006, in Toronto, at the 1<sup>st</sup> International Grandmothers Gathering of African and Canadian grandmothers, the Toronto Statement affirmed that we are drawn together by our similarities,

“...our deep love and undying devotion to our children; our profound concern about the havoc that HIV and AIDS has inflicted on the continent of Africa, and in particular on its women and children, and our understanding that we have within us everything needed to surmount seemingly insurmountable obstacles. We are strong, we are determined, we are resourceful, we are creative, we are resilient, and we have the wisdom that comes with age and experience.”

Now, 17 years later, the struggles continue. The themes for our Gatherings this week, here and on the African continent, were REFLECT, REJUVENATE, RENEW.

Yesterday we drafted our Winnipeg Grandmothers Statement, our Action Plan.

There has been much to celebrate. Over two decades of growing this movement, we have proven the collective power of grandmothers.

We have proven what we can accomplish in solidarity. As we look forward, we recommit to strengthening the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign in Canada. We will

empower ourselves, and our allies, to fight the inequities and injustices that drive the HIV epidemic.

We learn continuously from grandmothers in Africa and act in deeply felt solidarity with them to amplify their voices and affirm their goals, values, and expertise. Grandmothers in Africa are at the heart of all we do. We embrace a shared commitment to respond effectively to the HIV epidemic in Africa.

Inspired by all we have learned and shared during this week's International Grandmothers Gathering, we commit:

- to continue to raise awareness in our communities;
- to continue to raise funds;
- to continue to grow and strengthen the movement.

We are hopeful.

We have deep love and respect for our African sisters.

In 2006, in the Toronto Statement, grandmothers declared: "May this be the dawn of the grandmothers movement!" Today the movement shines bright. May we all embrace its energy and rise to new possibilities!

We will not rest until they can rest!

Thank you!

