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Greetings to President Ben Gurirab.

Mr. President ,

African Action on AIDS is extremely honoured by your presence here to day. We are so overwhelmed, that we do not have the usual flowery words used in diplomatic circles, because we are simple people. But as simple people we know how to detect authentic behaviour. We recognize in you a person who always sides with the oppressed, the poor the weak. Starting with your own country Namibia, you sided with your people when freedom was needed more than bread. The award you are the most pride of is the one you received from the United Nations interns in 1998, you made the plight of the children the focus of your mandate, and today, on the most important day of the United Nations marking Human Rights Day, you chose to be with the smallest group in town. We are very grateful. The energy that your presence fills us with will boost and help spread our activities far afield.

We particularly appreciate the presence of Mrs. Ben Gurirab who did not hesitate to say yes to our modest invitation, and who is ready to work with us in Namibia.

The Youth Association for Human Development in Ghana wrote to African Action on AIDS two years ago, warning that HIV/AIDS was spreading at an alarming rate in their community, and no one seemed to pay attention...

Since then, we have all witnessed the growing tide of deaths, which have deprived our communities of valuable teachers, farmers, parents, a situation that has worsened with the growing number of children orphaned.

In the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, AAA was established in the early 1990s as a safety net, not only to advocate for the rights of orphans, but to cover some of the most important rights, including the right for education. THAT IS WHY THE BIGGEST PART OF THE SUPPORT WE GET GOES TO PAYING TUITION, BUYING BOOKS, AND ENSURING COMPUTER LITERACY.

But we quickly discovered that all who die are not parents. Many of them are people in their prime lives, many of them, mostly girls between 15-19 years. It is already painful to know that our future is

jeopardized because these young people are dying; but the saddest part is that many of them are happy to die, because the future is uncertain.

THIS IS WHY WE CREATED CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE TO BRING THEM INTO A MORE CREATIVE ENVIRONMENT, WHERE THEY CAN ENGAGE IN PREVENTIVE ACTIVITIES,

Our meeting here today is to help transform all of us into advocates for the rights and well being of African orphans. THAT IS WHY WE THOUGHT YOU SHOULD ALL GET A COPY OF THE CONVENTION, WHICH IS NOT ONLY FOR GOVERNMENTS , BUT FOR ALL OF US TO IMPLEMENT.

We also wanted you to learn about different creative ways of helping. That is why Frank Gould who volunteered his time and skills and Sahle Demessie who offered her business skills are the main features of this meeting.

We believe that what we do should be replicated, multiplied, that is why our Brother Tony Spencer of Black National Commission on AIDS is here to brief us on their work and possibilities for us to to work together in the future.

But as we said in the flyer, please enjoy this elegant room and the usual hospitality of the Bahai International Community.