

SA gets praise for giving HIV-Aids priority treatment

KUTULLO MADISHA

THE South African government has been praised for continuing to prioritise the fight against HIV-Aids even though many other countries now regard it as just a condition afflicting the world.

Dr Ramneek Ahluwalia, director and head of the Higher Education and Training HIV-Aids programme, made the observation after attending the 20th International Aids Conference held in Melbourne recently.

He said it was clear at the conference that many activists now see HIV-Aids

as yet another disease of the poor, the criminalised and marginalised.

Ahluwalia was disturbed that the virus was being regarded as just another manifestation of global complacency.

"It was concerning to hear these harsh words from activists," Ahluwalia said.

Ahluwalia argued that some of the positive news includes a study published in *The Lancet* that found that there were about 29 million people living with HIV in 2013 and not 35 million as UNAids had been estimating. This will obviously relieve some of the pressure from the slowdown in funding.

"Notable too was that there were 1.8 million new infections compared to 1.3 million deaths underlining the point that the fight is improving but not over." UNAids now focuses on 90% of people with HIV being aware of their status, 90% of people being on treatment, 90% of those on treatment with lasting viral suppression by 2020.

"The fundamental message from Melbourne was this; so much achieved, so much more to be done," he said.

news@thenewage.co.za



EXPERT: Dr Ramneek Ahluwalia.