Remarks at UN Staff Yoga & Comprehensive Health Screening

Wellness Day

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Uganda

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Heads of UN Agencies

The UN Cares Team

Facilitators from Isha Yoga Foundation

and Aga Khan University Hospital

UN Colleagues

I am delighted to welcome you to this year's UN Wellness day.

We have set aside a half-day, on a working day, to demonstrate our commitment to a healthy UN workforce. It is important to dedicate this time to think about our physical and mental health and wellbeing, which is all too often set aside in our busy day-to-day schedules.
It is important that we collectively and individually learn, and create a wave of health consciousness in our networks and be role models and champions of the UN’s health programmes in Uganda. By adopting healthier practices, we can promote longer and healthier lives, and inspire others to follow.

I commend UN Cares for organising this very useful event and for uniting us under the area of health and well-being.

To give you some background information, UN Cares is part of the UN systems wide workplace programme on HIV and AIDS that aims at ensuring and enabling all staff in the United Nations and their families to have access to HIV and AIDS prevention, education, voluntary counseling and testing- services and a workplace free of stigma and discrimination.

The UN Cares that was launched in 2008 provides for 10 minimum standards for the HIV and AIDS response within the UN workplace and commits to creating an environment free of Stigma and Discrimination within the UN family.
Today’s Staff Wellness day marks one of the efforts through which the UN in Uganda is implementing the SDGS, namely SDG 3- Good Health and Wellbeing. This Staff Wellness event today presents an opportunity for the UN to reach out to its personnel and make sure that we are all health conscious and move towards a working environment free from any form of Stigma and Discrimination.

What can each and every one of us do to ensure a healthier life? We can begin with the simple steps of eating healthier, lighter meals at night, sitting in an upright position while at work, and trying to balance the work load. Work-life balance is not just a “fancy” word but an important message. We need to try and not place too much pressure on ourselves because if we are not healthy both mentally and physically then we will be less effective.

So let us leave this day with an important task of finding ways to how we can live and lead healthier and less stressful lives.

This event also helps to unite us in the fight against HIV, to show our support to colleagues, friends and family members infected and affected by HIV and AIDS.
AIDS is a global epidemic. Out of the 35 million people living with HIV in the world, 19 million do not know their HIV-positive status.

In our country Uganda, 7.3 per cent of the (adult) population has HIV, and this is why, we, as the UN need to work together, and deliver as one in educating the people of Uganda and ourselves about HIV and AIDS and how we can control and prevent it. It is important to be equipped with the right information that will empower us to protect ourselves from HIV.

As you recall UN Cares sent out a UN Workplace HIV/AIDS related Stigma and Discrimination Survey. UN Cares in its mandate to ensure a healthy work environment for all UN personnel and in the implementation of the SDGs namely SDG 3- Good Health and Well-being and SDG 10-Reduced Inequalities, is assessing the level of HIV related stigma in the UN in Uganda through a UN Workplace HIV/AIDS related Stigma and Discrimination Survey.

We must continue to work to prevent new HIV infections. Many of the youth are not receiving adequate information regarding HIV/AIDS at home or in the schools, which is limiting their options to make safe choices and in turn affecting the health and future of our
future population and workforce. We need to have the information ourselves to be able to pass it on to our families, colleagues and friends.

What role can we play in the control and prevention of HIV and AIDS? What role can we play in the elimination of stigma and discrimination in our workplaces? We must start with working on these issues at home, within the UN family if we are to adequately tackle the stigma that exists outside.

I would like to thank the UN, through their UN Cares Team and focal persons for having organized this special event for our personnel today and hopefully it will become an annual event.

I would also like to greatly appreciate the Isha Yoga Foundation and Aga Khan University Hospital for their great services here today.

I thank you and let’s have some fun while we learn how to be healthier!