



Fight against Aids is like apartheid, says Mandela

FROM NIGEL WILLIAMSON IN CAPE TOWN

Thank you for the music: Nelson Mandela greets Beyoncé

NELSON MANDELA will mark International Aids Day today by asking the world to help Africa fight the epidemic with the same commitment that it once gave to fighting apartheid. Addressing the crowd of 40,000 in Greenpoint Stadium, Mr Mandela said that the concert was just the beginning of his campaign. He said: "Musicians played an important part in the campaign to liberate our country. This time I am asking them to join forces to free our world from HIV/Aids and bring hope for the new century." Aids was no longer just a disease, he said. Like apartheid, it had become "a human rights issue".

Since his retirement from politics, Mr Mandela has campaigned for retroviral Aids drugs to be available to African sufferers. In a recent breakthrough, Thabo Mbeki, his successor as President of South Africa, announced that medicines will be distributed free, thanks to financial support from the former US President Bill Clinton's charitable foundation.

Mr Mandela came late to the Aids cause. The disease increased under his presidency while he was preoccupied with building a post-apartheid republic. Since 1991, the prevalence of HIV in South Africa has risen from less than 1 per cent of the population to more than 20 per cent. Five million of the estimated 30 million Africans with HIV live in South Africa.

Footage of the concert has been made available free to television companies to raise awareness of the campaign. The fundraising will come later when a double CD and DVD are released in February.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,9911-916091,00.html>

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