
Nelson Mandela sends out an SOS on the AIDS pandemic across the world calling for heightened awareness and funds to fight the HIV/AIDS crisis

ATTN: Feature Editors

- Historic 'Mandela SOS' concert to take place on Robben Island in South Africa on February 2nd 2003.

Cape Town, South Africa - Nelson Mandela's SOS has been answered. At a launch event today at the National Botanical Gardens in Cape Town, Nelson Mandela - joined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Oprah Winfrey, Virgin Group founder Richard Branson and Diesel President and founder Renzo Rosso - announced that he is to host his very first concert. This extraordinary event, featuring top artists from the world of pop and rock, will take place on 2nd February, 2003 on Robben Island in South Africa, where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned 30 years ago.

"HIV/AIDS is not only a health issue but has risen to become a human rights crisis," said Nelson Mandela. "I am asking each person in every country not to be silent witnesses to this devastation but to answer our SOS by raising both awareness and the vital funds necessary to fight and win against this disease."

Africa has been hit harder by HIV/AIDS than any other region of the world. More than 17 million have died from the disease and another 28.1 million are infected with HIV. Currently there are 11 million AIDS orphans in Africa and without urgent action there may be more than 25 million by the end of this decade.

The 'Mandela SOS' concert, presented by EPOP Productions (Education Powers Our Planet) aims to raise funds and awareness for the worldwide AIDS pandemic and is to be staged within the walls of the notorious maximum security prison on Robben Island.

Tickets will be free and distributed by competition and lottery (details of which will be announced later) and the event is to be televised globally with 100% of all funds raised going directly to the following charities:-

The Nelson Mandela Foundation
UNAIDS
Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights
Robben Island Museum

As one of the sponsors of the live event, MSN will host the Mandela MSN website (www.mandelasos.com), which will feature coverage for the live event on February 2nd and will provide links to the UN Foundation for fundraising. Further support comes from Virgin, Palm Pictures, Samsung and Diesel. More sponsors will be announced shortly.

The full bill of participating artists will be announced at a later date.

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PR Newswire Europe Ltd.

209 - 215 Blackfriars Road, London, SE1 8NL
Tel : +44 (0)20 7490 8111
Fax : +44 (0)20 7490 1255
E-mail : info@prnewswire.co.uk

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