



REMARKS OF HER EXCELLENCY MRS JEANNETTE KAGAME

**MOH Side Event: “Biopharmaceutical Research & Manufacturing: Increasing accessibility
towards improved women’s health globally”**



Kigali, 18 July 20

Honorable Minister of Health, Dr. Sabin Nsanzimana,
Honorable Ines Mpambara, Minister of State in Charge of
Cabinet Affairs at the Office of the Prime Minister,
Honorable Assumpta Ingabire, Minister of State in
charge of Social Affairs at the Ministry of Local
Government,
Healthcare Professionals and Stakeholders,
Partners and Friends, Ladies
and Gentlemen,
Good morning!

- How delightful to host this Women Deliver Conference, and to see so many advocates of Women's Empowerment in attendance.
- If this great turnout is indeed the result of years of efforts, and investments in the achievement of Gender Equality, we can only be proud, and encouraged.

Dear Guests,

- The Covid 19 pandemic was yet another painful lesson for the world, on our interdependency as people, irrespective of gender, from Global North to Global South.
- Indeed, Covid attested that one positive case was one too many, turning loved ones into threats of possibly fatal infection, making us erect barriers against those we cohabitate with, and wish to be closest to, in times of worry.
- I call that poetic injustice: the fact that we were forced into painful and lengthy isolation, as a cruel reminder of how lost and lonely we can become, without a community on which to rely, and with which to engage.

- So how could we reject the responsibility, of protecting and uplifting every single one of this community's members, of being each other's keepers, at an individual and leadership level?
- The answer is simple: we cannot, we must not.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- As we braved the pandemic, we watched, holding our breath, as women assisted in the creation, production and unrolling of a vaccine, that should have taken a decade of efforts, in under a year.
- These women saved lives, protected our economy and watched over our communities, while carrying the additional burdens – domestic, familial or social – that unjustly compound on them, in times of crises.

- What a gift to witness women around the world, and indeed, in Rwanda, excelling in spaces, from which they were once kept at arm's length. Rwandan women are at the forefront of different levels of leadership; in science, technology, and education.
- Our constitution states that at least 30% of those employed by institutions must be women.
- At the present time, 61% of our parliamentarians are women.
- More than half of our cabinet members are women,
- And, yes, the majority of our judiciary agents, 53% to be specific, are women.
- Perhaps this is the reason that Rwandan women feel centered in our country's governance; perhaps this is why, we feel that gender equality may be soon within our reach, if we maintain our current pace of progress - our current determination to overcome the gender gap.

- Our resolve was fortified by the report that during the pandemic, at a time when gender equality was falling behind the world over, the Global Gender Gap Report listed Rwanda as the 7th most gender-equal society in the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- The empowerment of women must be considered, among others, to be a moral and a global health issue, and Global health problems can only be solved by comprehensive global health solutions.
- The global South and North must increasingly work together, not only in times of crises, but consistently.
- In this stride, we must foster a collaborative environment, that promotes inclusivity and enhances the overall effectiveness of medical advancements.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- The critical role of biopharmaceutical research and manufacturing, in improving women's health cannot be overstated.
- Through our collective efforts, we can strengthen women's involvement in biopharmaceutical research and manufacturing.
- It is essential, logical, deserved, and highly overdue, that women should have a seat at the table, when decisions are made regarding their healthcare.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- **If progress, social justice and health for all are the objectives, let us pledge to stay united in demanding space for women, listening to women, and uplifting women, at personal, advocacy and policy planes.**

- When the right policies are in place, systems are resilient, and when systems are resilient, they protect their own, no matter the scale of the threat encountered.
- Let these prevailing systems, be what we leave behind, at the dusk of our service, to our cherished communities.

Thank you for your attention, and good afternoon to you all.