

First Lady Jeannette Kagame's remarks

at the

**First Anniversary commemoration of the global effort to
eliminate cervical cancer**

Wednesday, 17 November 2021

Son Excellence Sika Bella Kaboré, Première Dame de La République du Burkina Faso,

Excellency Tshepo Motsepe, First Lady of the Republic of South Africa,

Excellency Neo Masisi, First Lady of the Republic of Botswana,

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organization,

Excellencies Ambassadors,

Dear engaged partners, dedicated activists, allies and friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning,

Good afternoon,

Good evening!

I am honoured to be here today, one year into our commitment to implement a Global Strategy, to Accelerate the Elimination of Cervical Cancer as a Public Health Problem.

Fighting a crisis that is happening amidst another crisis is no easy feat.

I commend the W.H.O for not pushing women, particularly those from the developing world, to the side, as it weathers the storm of the coronavirus pandemic.

By placing concern for people of both genders, and of all races and ages, at the heart of medicine, the W.H.O has made commendable headway, in devising a permanent solution, to the cervical cancer emergency.

Distinguished Guests,

We all know that early detection is by far, the most effective method, of waning the fatality of cervical cancer.

Mass screenings are essential to our mission; therefore, they should be considered an extension, of the *human right, to the highest attainable standard of health, conducive to living a life in dignity.*

Since the introduction of cervical cancer screenings in Rwanda in 2015, over 170,000 women have been examined.

I am confident that by this time next year, new partnerships will have helped raise this number further, and will speak to the force of our momentum.

Valued partners, devoted activists, allies and friends,

As the conversation between nations shifts, to include vaccine manufacturing and benevolent research, I hope that this spike in international health consciousness, multiplies global resolutions, to make cervical cancer prevention, accessible to all.

Rwanda has already surpassed, the target set by the W.H.O cervical cancer elimination strategy, of having 90% of girls under 15 fully vaccinated for HPV.

In fact, since 2011, our immunization of young girls aged 12 has consistently stood above 90%.

However, research has emerged in favour, of also inoculating young boys against the virus, in order to reduce transmission rates. Therefore, our developing nations need to be equipped, to double our efforts in the unrolling of vaccines.

I invite industries, the private sector, researchers and development partners, to work with our governments, to reduce the price of HPV vaccines, HPV DNA tests and the adoption of innovative technologies, such as the W.H.O's Artificial Intelligence visual examination tools.

I hope for an African continent where, these vaccines are produced locally, with the support of our every ally, who I believe, shares our vision of Health autonomy for all nations.

To Our Women Stakeholders,

Caring for your health, must not be a periodic trend.

The testimonies of survivors, must be consistently amplified.

We owe them the promise, that their suffering is not the fate, that we are allowing for the next generation of women.

We owe the family of Henrietta Lacks, the faith that the research, that we are indebted to her for, will lead us to a world, with zero cervical cancer fatality.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A goal of such scale, requires ambition from both genders.

We know that this goal, cannot be attained with the burden fully resting on women. I again call on our male counterparts,

to proactively join this fight. This is true allyship in action: sharing our burden, to alleviate the load of women, as they strive for change, that will benefit our entire societies.

Thank you, and to more years of commitment and partnerships.