

First Lady Jeannette Kagame's Remarks

at

the Resource Mobilization Event

***“Free to Shine: Global partnership towards
eliminating mother-to-child transmission of HIV in
Africa”***,

in the Margins of the 73rd UNGA

Tuesday, 25th September 2018

New York, USA

**Madame Adjoavi Sika Kaboré,
My dear sisters,
Distinguished partners,
Esteemed ladies and gentlemen,**

Good morning.

Let me begin by expressing my pleasure, to be with you today, as we gather for this high-level meeting on “**Free To Shine: Global Partnership Towards Eliminating Mother-To-Child Transmission of HIV in Africa**”.

Indeed, these gatherings allow us to reflect on the collective responsibilities of both the public and private sectors, to further invest in human capital, and the building of well-crafted systems, to help respond to some of the biggest threats, affecting our sustainable development.

Distinguished audience,

In Rwanda, our desire to fight the AIDS epidemic drove us to call on all stakeholders, to come to the table, so that together, we could pull all our resources to fund initiatives, aimed at ending AIDS by 2030.

Thanks to concerted efforts, and the active involvement of communities, we lowered the HIV prevalence rate from about 10% in the early 2000's, to below 3% nationwide, today.

The necessity to protect those gains and further lower those statistics, is now also calling on my country, to develop more innovative financing mechanisms, to further strengthen our health systems.

Indeed, with our ambitious goal of eliminating HIV/AIDS by the year 2030, we simply cannot afford to slow down in devising ways to maintain, and improve existing interventions.

Honourable ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to take a moment now, to share with you the **Free to Shine** Campaign, launched in my country, earlier this month, under the theme: ***‘Umwana Wanjye, Ishema Ryanjye’*** or ***‘My Child, My Pride’***.

For us, it was an opportunity to reflect on the impact of our HIV response to-date, while raising the bar higher, to forever remove all barriers to thriving lives, in our communities.

By June 2018, the Mother-to-Child Transmission rate in Rwanda stood at 1.5%, and over 97% of health facilities provided Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) services, contributing to 96% of neonates, receiving necessary antiretroviral (ARV) treatments.

My organization, Imbuto Foundation, has also been deeply engaged in this journey, through initiatives such as the Family Package program, offering a comprehensive package of services to families affected by HIV; and other Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH)

programs promoting the rights of our youth to access information, along with quality treatment, and prevention services.

Esteemed audience,

These results could not have been achieved without a shared vision between policy makers, implementing agencies and partners, to see the realization of a people-centered approach, for true health equity.

The **Free to Shine** campaign presents us with a platform to foster ownership, and increased resource mobilization – which are key in addressing timely access to antenatal care, appropriate adherence to ARV treatment, and exposure of children to HIV.

Through this Campaign, our Ministry of Health, alongside my Foundation, Imbuto, and diverse partners in HIV response, have set out to reinforce our national interventions, as a way of further strengthening our commitment, to achieving zero new HIV infections, by 2020.

Distinguished audience,

As I conclude, allow me to underscore once more that the fight against the AIDS epidemic can be won, but it requires unwavering global partnerships.

I therefore, call on you here today, to join this noble cause, by committing or recommitting yourselves, to invest in human capital and the building of foolproof systems, as the surest way to reach our goals, and sustain them.

I thank you for your kind attention.