

**First Lady Jeannette Kagame's Remarks at the "When
Women Lead" High-Level Dialogue during the Nairobi
Summit on the ICPD25**

Nairobi, 13 November 2019

Panel I:

**Intervention in response to "What more can we do to
place women's
leadership at the heart of the transformative global
agenda?"**

Your Majesty Queen Mother of Bhutan,

Your Royal Highness Princess of Tonga,

Excellencies Dear Sisters,

Executive Director of UNFPA,

Distinguished Ladies,

Dear Youth Representatives,

Dear Leaders and Sisters,

Good morning and thank you for inviting me to address this important question of women's leadership to advance the transformative global agenda.

Before I begin, let me state that there is no one size fits all, as women are not a homogenous group, and the reality they live is not always the same.

Let us first acknowledge that:

- 1) Structural, social, religious and cultural barriers and stereotypes, lack of resources and sometimes skills constrain them from actively participating in leadership;

We must therefore ask ourselves, what can be done to place women's leadership at the heart of the transformative global agenda?

I believe that a lot is needed before we can even think this is achievable:

- We must break the cycle of the vicious poverty trap, and lack of proper education.
- We must promote the self esteem of women, while continuously engaging the men, who lack the sensitivity to respect the fundamental rights of women, to participate in decision making, at all levels.

Dear Sisters,

If we must attain:

- zero unmet need for family planning;
- zero maternal deaths; and
- zero violence and harmful practices against women and girls, including child marriage and female genital mutilation.

We must work toward a mindset shift about women's rights over their own bodies, and their future.

We must carefully design and implement systems through which knowledge is imparted to individuals, while ensuring that their comprehensive medical care and follow up pregnancy services, are observed.

Above all, to make all that accessible, countries' innovative health financing policies need to be formalized together with a pro-people insurance scheme, to achieve universal health coverage.

In regards to gender-based violence and harmful practices: on one hand, through the loud, 'silence' around GBV acts, we perpetuate the perverse effects of impunity, not to mention the psycho-social consequences on the victims;

- While on the other hand, the accountability which although protects the victim, often results in family disruption.

This begs the question of how do we save ourselves from ourselves?

Furthermore, to ensure gender mainstreaming, there are pre-requisites, such as:

a) Strong leadership at the highest level as Political will, must never be taken for granted.

b) Strong institutions and legal

Frameworks.

And last, but not least:

c) Strong human resource capacity – as we need the *right* people in the *right* places, making the *right* decisions at the *right* time, to deliver impactful women's leadership.

In conclusion, let us all further dismantle the barriers to true gender equality, while envisioning the immense possibilities, of women's self-actualisation.

Thank you for your kind attention!