

First Lady Jeannette Kagame's Remarks at

The Youth Forum Series

"Beyond this Moment. 2.0"

Kigali, 7 December 2017

Right Honourable Prime Minister,
Honourable Ministers,
Resident Coordinator of the ONE UN,
Esteemed Panellists,
Distinguished Partners,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Young men and women,

Mwiriweho.

I am happy to see you all here today! Welcome back to many of you, and 'Karibu' to the new ones, to Imbuto's very own version of a **'Happy Hour'**; where it's not about drinks, but rather about inviting you, our young people, to have a conversation about our future, your role, your participation, your responsibilities, you name it, in the building of our country.

This should not be too heavy to carry, I trust the speakers and panellists will make it cool as we wind up a busy day, as they give us different tips on how to navigate this world.

So please, make yourselves comfortable, don't hold back, everything will be on the house!

Esteemed Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today's Youth Forum Series, themed **"Beyond This Moment. 2.0"** is one that we are bringing back, as we are coming to the end of this particular year of 2017.

Allow me to start by thanking our speakers and panellists, for accepting to join this important conversation, as we feel they embody what we wish, for our Rwandan youth, to not only understand, but also adopt in their everyday lives, as they contribute to the betterment of our society.

Indeed, the purpose of these Youth Forum Series, which Imbuto Foundation started in 2007, as part of our Youth Empowerment and Mentorship Programme, is to positively engage, educate, and empower our young people.

Like the previous forum, we are here to further emphasize to our young men and women, the importance of playing their part in the direction of this country, by taking on leadership roles, whether they are still pursuing their education, have entered the workforce, or are already raising a family.

Young men and women,

Standing here in front of you, takes me back to my younger days, living in an environment that was not ‘mine’, in a context drastically different, than the one you are experiencing now.

As a young person growing up in the diaspora, many of us did not have the luxury to be ‘spoiled’, or even take certain basic things for granted.

We had little to save, or to hold on to, so you can understand that ironically, the stakes are much higher for you, who are enjoying the security of a country you can truly call your own.

As you can understand, growing up in that situation leads one to two main choices: you either become desperate to rise above the many challenges that affect you and your community, or, you simply give up fighting, and let events carry you through life.

So my questions to you, young people here today are:

- Are we, the older generations, telling you enough about what had to be done to get Rwanda to this day?
- Are you too young to understand the sacrifices that were made for you?
- And last but not least, can you fully comprehend what you stand to lose, if you do not fight to preserve it?

Esteemed youth,

I humbly call on all of you, to always think through what you plan to do next, as keeping the end in mind, will guide you when seeking excellence, and the sustainability of our different achievements.

Be mindful that the kind of losses that you will register will differ according to where you are in life, as you start thinking of yourself, less as a single individual, but rather as an entity that only makes sense in a cobweb of aspirations, abilities, and goals for a better future.

As you start living a purposeful life, and are able to make a distinction between 'living' versus 'existing', you will start acting more responsibly, in the choices that you make.

I hope you give yourself the time to revisit your 'core', and reflect on the principles that guide your life, and your values, in your social and professional duties.

As indeed, you are never too young to reflect upon what our world needs, to be a better, and safer place.

Distinguished audience,

Today's gathering is a continuation of the first "Beyond this Moment" forum, that was held in December 2014.

That first edition presented to our guests how to engage with national issues, while striving to become well-rounded global thinkers, who never forget the importance of holding on to one's pride, and dignity.

- The current events we are witnessing on our continent must push us to understand, and demystify, what is causing some of our people to become so disillusioned with their own nations, to the point of risking their lives, in their quest for greener pastures.

- I humbly believe that we must remain authentic to who we are, strongly rooted in our identity as the children of our land, while learning to adapt to this global world, never afraid to correct what can be improved.
- We understand that decades of institutionalised discrimination, and dehumanization, led to the destruction of our society. But we also acknowledge that the rebuilding of this nation was made possible because of the vision of young men and women, from all walks of life, to see our country rise from its ashes.
- I urge you to grasp even more the essence of who we are as a people, and that you never stop seeking lessons from our past, to further understand, how some key aspects of our Rwandan values, are meant to guide our vision towards a prosperous nation.

- It is imperative that you learn to embrace your leadership abilities from early on, and that you do NOT allow your young age to deter you from stepping into the light, to become a key player, in the development and prosperity of our nation.
- I would like for you to also think of someone who can hold you accountable to your actions, because after all, we are each other's keepers.

Young men and women,

Baravuga ngo *“Igihe cyatakaye ntikigaruka”*. Igihe cyanyu rero ni iki. Nta muto muri mwe wo kuba atashobora urugamba rwo kubaka igihugu cyacu! Kuko mwahawe ibuye ry'ifatizo n'abababanjirije baduhaye iki gihugu.

The moment is now, and we all must seize it.

Esteemed audience,

As I conclude my remarks, allow me to share once again, these words by the late Cyprien Rugamba in his poem:

IKIVI

“Urumve shami nashibutse... Uzase nanjye, urenzeho Unsumbye
Ndabigusabye
Usoze ibyanjye kandi uterure ibyawwe, Mwana wanjye
Jya utuganya utwaza.”

NTUMPEHO

“Umuco mwiza wakureze, Ntugatume udindira.
Mu by’abandi jya utoranya ibyiza, Ibifutamyeye ujugunye.
Niba urabukwa iby’ahandi Ugata n’urwo wambaye, Ntumpeho.”

UMUCO WACU

“Uwanga umuco wamubyaye
Asa n’ishami ryihakana aho ryatoshye.
Umwana mwiza ni umwe uvuga Ivuko ryiza ryamubyaye,
Agahora arisingiza.”

I hope today's conversations, will leave you with a renewed sense of commitment towards seeking excellence in all that you do, as you ask yourselves if you are doing everything it takes, with everything you have, as we build the kind of strong systems that will outlive us.

I thank you all for your kind attention and wish us all fruitful discussions.