

Honourable Guests,

Distinguished Speakers,

Esteemed Entrepreneurs,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning.

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to this Imbuto's Youth Forum Series, themed '*Smart Health Opportunities in Africa*', held on the occasion of the Transform Africa Summit.

These Youth Forum Series are very dear to us at the Foundation, as for the past 10 years, they have provided our youth with a platform to interact with leaders, and experts from all walks of life, to discuss a wide range of topics of social, political, educational and professional relevance to their lives.

I take this opportunity to also thank our panellists for being with us today, and for sharing the kind of knowledge that builds stronger and healthier communities.

Our hope is that each and everyone present here today, will leave this forum, feeling the urge to share what they learned and in the process, will ignite a spark in someone else's mind, to leave their mark in this world, by seeing in a challenge an opportunity to innovate.

Distinguished audience,

Today's forum themed '*Smart Health Opportunities in Africa*' provides a suitable platform to explore creative and entrepreneurial ways for the youth, institutions and other key players to address an important aspect of any community.

As our world continues to evolve, we must learn how to capitalise on diverse innovations, adapt or improve them to respond to new realities and resulting priorities.

Indeed, it is our duty as citizens of this world to play our role in contributing, in our own capacities, to the strengthening of our

health systems, while devising new strategies that ensure all members of our communities can fully benefit from their rights to affordable, and efficient healthcare.

Rwanda's track record in relation to education, health, social, political and economic innovations is one that should inspire us all to continue breaking new grounds, as we see original approaches to solving challenges found in our communities.

From the use of drones to deliver blood and medical supplies to hospitals, to centralising medical data from nationwide health institutions, to seeing our young people rewarded for using the latest technologies to improve service delivery in hospitals, we can certainly say that we are living in an exciting era, as we are witnessing the realisation of the immense possibilities, of the imagination.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The health of the Rwandan population has always been a national priority, and as such, an integral aspect of the diverse interventions carried out by Imbuto Foundation through the years.

In fact, our first programme, called Family Package, was initiated 16 years ago, to help respond to the HIV and AIDS epidemic crisis, which was heightened by the mass rapes that occurred during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

Today, my Foundation implements 6 projects, directly or indirectly, linked to the health sector, and targeting different segments of our population.

Through our different programmes, we also pay particular attention to the question of sexual and reproductive health of our young people, as this issue will have a direct impact on the health of our future generations.

For instance, the continental *All-In campaign*, which was initiated by the Organisation of African First Ladies against HIV/AIDS, was launched last year in Rwanda, in partnership with the Ministry of Health. This campaign addressed the HIV/AIDS epidemic among the youth, through nationwide projects for the elimination of the mother-to-child transmission (EMTCT) of the virus; activities involving voluntary counselling and testing (VCT); but also mobilising the community to actively fight the spread of the virus

and its stigma; while dismantling stereotypes associated with this disease.

Issues affecting the wellbeing of this demographic group, which makes 40% of our population, simply cannot be ignored, and it is our duty to empower our youth with life-saving information, while encouraging them to take a front seat in the efforts aiming to curb health issues affecting our communities.

Esteemed audience,

Last year, Imbuto Foundation, in partnership with UNFPA and UKAid, also launched the iAccelerator project, and with it, was given a challenge to young people to provide a business-oriented solution to a sexual reproductive health issue. It was with great pleasure that we saw several young people using their creative and entrepreneurial spirit, to design sustainable, and youth-friendly, solutions.

Distinguished Partners,

I would like to take this moment to thank you for your commitment, through which we are able to see the realisation of projects such as the iAccelerator, which provides significant financial and professional development support, via a much-needed platform for young people to put their creative minds, at the service of a greater good.

Esteemed Innovators,

Thank you for being torchbearers among your peers, in the fight for solutions to sexual and reproductive health issues, that threaten our communities.

Your innovation will play a role in providing young people with informed knowledge on HIV and AIDS, STIs and other reproductive health related issues.

Your dedication aligns with Rwanda's efforts towards reducing our current HIV prevalence rate of 3%, to a much lower one.

We have every faith, that your great ideas, combined with strong health systems, will change our communities for the better, and ultimately offer great hope for a healthier future.

Distinguished Audience,

As I conclude my remarks, I would like to acknowledge all those young men and women that participated in the iAccelerator challenge, and extend my congratulations to the Top 4 Innovators who will present their work today.

I wish you all the success during your pitching session with “Face the Gorillas” and trust this is just the beginning of your entrepreneurial journey.

I thank you for your kind attention and wish us all fruitful discussions throughout this Transform Africa Summit.