

First Lady Jeannette Kagame's remarks

at the

**International Women's Day Celebrations | Nairobi,
Kenya**

Tuesday, 8 March 2022

**Your Excellency The President of Kenya, Mr Uhuru
Kenyatta**

**Your Excellency The First Lady of Kenya, Margaret
Kenyatta,**

Honourable Dignitaries,

Distinguished Guests,

Good Morning/Afternoon.

**Ni Furaha kwangu, kuwa pamoja nanyi leo hii hapa
Nairobi. Asanteni sana kwa mwaliko.**

How befitting, and joyful to be here, with you on this International Women's Day, to celebrate phenomenal women and gender activism around the world, upon the invitation of a woman for whom I bear great esteem.

Your Excellency, Mrs Kenyatta, you said, on this very day, six years ago, that "The actions of women, measurable and immeasurable, hold up half of our society, half of our country, and, as you quoted it 'half of the world's sky'".

There is a thorny truth to these words. For all their beauty, they address an injustice that has festered for millennia, and that crucial dates such as this one, have advocated against, for over a century.

Gender inequality lives on, despite the innovative, and at times heroic, feats that many women around the world have achieved, and for which they have been publically recognized. At the rate of our current efforts, the World Economic Forum estimates that it will take 135 years, or until the year 2157, for the gender gap to close.

The figures are grim, and some questions remain unanswered.

With newly emerging threats to the stability and welfare of populations, such as climate change and resource depletion, is the world truly comfortable with women being the first in the casualty line? Women make up 70% of the world's poor, and this poverty renders them particularly vulnerable to the humanitarian consequences of natural disasters, drought and famine.

80% of the people displaced by climate change are women.

Therefore, **Ladies and Gentlemen**, to stand aside, as our resources are mis-distributed and depleted, and as natural disasters gain in frequency, is at best to accept a fate, that rips the majority of the world's women from their homes, and that robs them of the dignity to which they are entitled.

Honorable Dignitaries, Esteemed Guests,

We must address the global indifference towards the issues of sustainability, and climate change mitigation.

Passivity has poisoned us. It has fed the cynicism of some, and the hopelessness of others. It has convinced masses that climate change, a frightful brute of modern society's own making, is unbeatable, unavoidable and most importantly, none of our concern. But to this I must ask what justice, what dignity, and what Godliness there is, in choosing to relegate an ailing world, to our children.

I know there is integrity and heart in this world, for I have seen their wonders in women whose names are synonymous with courage, dedication, and environmental heroism. To your beloved, and never forgotten **Wangari Mathaai**¹: Rest in Peace. Today, we celebrate the values with which she enriched the world, and the movements, initiatives and vision that these values have engendered. Today, we recognize the scale of the dangers that she, and brave women like Gambia's Isatou /[Ai-sa-tou](#)/ Ceesay, spotted and opposed before most of us would even know. And today, I hope that our decisiveness honours these

¹ Wangari Mathaai was a Kenyan Political And Environmental activist, and the laureate of a Nobel Prize⁷

women's efforts, and those of every individual, that has embarked on the green mission.

Ladies And Gentlemen,

The Kigali Agreement, which has been ratified by 129 countries, had ambitions beyond reducing greenhouse gas emissions: it needed to show precedence, for any Rwandan, and any African watching, that change could be sparked, or energized here, on our soil.

The Rwanda Green Fund's success has been a testament to our potential for ethical, sustainable advancement, and to the impact of this progress, on the welfare of both men and women.

The numbers are beyond encouraging.

Of the 176,000 green jobs created by the fund in Rwanda alone, 60% have gone to women. I believe this figure offers irrefutable proof, that mitigation, sustainability and gender equality are interdependent.

Esteemed Guests, I hope that every young mind, every organization, every institution or governmental body, that desires a green future, is faithful that our sustainability attainable, if we alleviate the load of women.

So I ask, with stubborn optimism, are we ready at last, to do the imperative?

Your Excellency, Mr President, your presence today testifies to your engagement to a cause, that is much better described as the responsibility of an entire civilization, than the plight of one gender. I applaud your integrity, for it is impossible to truly love one's people, without loving the half that has, and will birth them all.

Esteemed Guests, allow me to celebrate one more incredible woman's accomplishments today, as I close my remarks.

Considering how great an athlete she is, it is no surprise, that she has sprung with such vitality, between planning this wonderful celebration, creating a learning center that aligns excellence, innovation and social awareness, and tending to the responsibilities of her position, with her signature grace.

Mrs Kenyatta.

Your Institute for Gender and Social Development, is yet another impressive finish line you have crossed. This collaboration, between **Beyond Zero** and the Kenya School of Development, is ripe with promise.

My Dear Sister, you have exemplified how the half, can and should strive to provide solutions (*resolutions?*) for itself. You have demonstrated, with the hard-work and principle of a truly empowered woman, that though support is valued and welcomed, a community, whether united by experience, race or gender, can look inwards for solutions.

I am thankful for today, and I am looking forward to closing it, with a wonderful read */reed/* through the inspirational anthology of speeches, that you have published today.

Congratulations again.

Nawashukuru sana kwa muda wenu. Muwe na siku njema.

Happy International Women's Day!