



REMARKS OF HER EXCELLENCY
MRS JEANNETTE KAGAME

UNFPA Women Deliver Conference Pre-session



KIGALI, 17 JULY 2023

Our Dear Host, Dr Natalia Kanem, Executive Director of UNFPA,

Your Excellency Delphine O, Ambassador and Secretary General of the “Forum Génération Égalité, France”,

Your Excellency Harjit Sajjan, Minister of International Development and Minister responsible for the Canadian Pacific Economic Development Agency,

Women Leaders and Allies,

Dear Friends,

- Good morning. I hope fresh Rwandan coffee started off your day pleasantly.
- A woman once asked, where the world would be today, if the gendered obstacles that women and girls face in their development, had never existed.
- Yes, this world would be a kinder place; one where parents could enjoy the birth of a daughter, without the aching worry, that this daughter may grow up to be harmed and stifled, simply for her gender identity.

KEYNOTE

- We can only imagine how developed, how inclusive, how evolved a world could be, with twice as much harnessed potential.
- But why should we simply imagine? Why should this reasonable target feel like a dream?
- Is the systemic controlling of women and girls, the governance of women and girls' bodies and minds, truly the fate our world has chosen?
- Women will not be discouraged by the extent of the work ahead.
- Equality is our birth-promised right, and it can and will be secured.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- When women's bodily autonomy is overstepped, when women's health is compromised, the choices that affect them the most are taken out of their hands. They are infantilized, and often exploited.

KEYNOTE

- And yet, created equal as we are from birth, women are equally capable and deserving as men, to decide on their own fate, and make valid choices impacting the welfare of their communities.
 - Our choices, can be equally instrumental as men's judgements, to achieving sustainable development.
 - So why are preventable strains allowed to fester, at the cost of countless women's power of choice?
 - This is the good fight that UNFPA has chosen to engage in: reclaiming women's equal right to health, to bodily autonomy, to wellness; promoting and preserving women's right to know safety and wellbeing, over unnecessary and avoidable suffering.
1. Ending maternal deaths.
 2. Ending the unmet need for family planning.
 3. Ending gender-based violence and all harmful practices.

KEYNOTE

- UNFPA, your transformative agenda aligns with Rwanda's vision of an empowered, dignified, protected population across genders.
- Thank you for offering committed collaboration to those who, like you, refuse that women, who are so often nurturers, protectors, helpers, should be made to feel helpless.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Partnering with UNFPA has been nothing short of conducive.
- For women to be healthy, they need strong health systems.
- A strong health system has optimal services tailored to the populations it serves.

KEYNOTE

- A strong health system is one that can mobilise populations to protect their own health, and their community's wellness too.
- A strong health system is one that prevents more than it treats, through education, through public engagement and the encouragement of healthy lifestyles and practices.
- Such a system catalyses prolific life choices, for men AND women.
- There must be the political will to deploy all necessary resources, to health for all. This will, must give way to appropriate budget allocations, policies and laws, and synchronized efforts across all state branches.
- There must also be, the dynamic I feel the people in this room embody: a commitment to selfless, devoted collaboration, between activists, advocates, organisations and senior leadership.

KEYNOTE

- I can only encourage you, today, in trusting and investing in sound partnerships, for here, we have witnessed their transformative power firsthand.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Before I close my remarks, I wish to thank the Women-Led Organisations and Feminist Organisations present here today, for the groundwork they engage in every day.
- The rights that you have claimed for all women, with the backing of visionary leaders, are the reason we here today - the reason we are able to defend our right to choose health, to equally contribute to our countries' development, and to be successful in any of our other endeavours.
- Thank you for being your sisters' keepers. I urge you to keep some of the grace and love you give the world, for yourselves.

Dear Guests,

KEYNOTE

- May we all, as members of society, pledge to be the custodians of women's basic human right to parity.
- May the leaders on whom women's fates depend, realise that every day of gender inequality is a moral, social and economic failure.
- Do we really want indifference to be our legacy to a world that needed us to act?
- Thank you for your kind attention and work,
- I wish you a wonderful session.