

First Lady Jeannette Kagame's remarks

at the

**Foundation Stone-Laying Ceremony of the Heart
Centre | Masaka, Rwanda**

Wednesday, 29 December 2021

- **Honourable Minister and Dignitaries,**
- **Members of the Diplomatic Corps,**
- **Vice-President of The Heart Care and Research Foundation, Professor Sir Magdi Habib Yacoub,**
- **Members of the Board of MY Heart Care & Research Foundation – Rwanda,**
- **Distinguished guests,**
- **Ladies and gentlemen,**

Good morning!

It is my absolute pleasure to be with you on this beautiful day, to inaugurate the construction of **MY Heart Centre**. The establishment of a state-of-the-art medical hub for heart care services, training and research, here in Rwanda, is truly an exciting milestone for our health industry, country and continent.

But before examining the auspicious impact of this endeavour, allow me to extend a warm welcome to those who have come from afar. I hope you will get to experience our Rwandan hospitality, despite the restrictions of the covid-19 pandemic.

I want to take this opportunity, to warmly thank the Heart Care and Research Foundation, for this ambitious and vital enterprise.

I also want to thank **Professor Magdi**, for the relentless efforts, that started with a journey three years ago, and have led to today's celebration, despite challenges and unavoidable delays, related to the pandemic.

I would also wish to express my appreciation to the Government and people of the **Arab Republic of Egypt**, for their dedication to this project.

Even though you could not be here today, **Honourable Minister Sameh Shoukry**, your involvement is a true sign of the friendship between our countries.

Your ample support, and the efforts of all members of the **MY Heart Centre** Foundation's Board of Directors, have been fundamental to the achievement of this mission.

Distinguished Guests,

Often times, the end of the year is an opportunity for many of us to look back at what we have accomplished, while determining new resolutions to improve the lives we are leading, and those of the people around us.

So ending the year with the start of a construction project, of the necessity and scale of MY Heart Centre, is truly befitting.

It is a perfect bridge into the healthy future we want to embrace as a people; a future where the fatality of Non-Communicable Diseases, such as heart conditions, and unequal access to quality healthcare, are no longer unbeatable threats.

Today, I am grateful, and hopeful, to have laid the foundation

stone of **MY Heart Centre**, which will render our vision of a cardiovascular care and research facility on firm ground, an immediate reality.

Ladies and gentlemen, we truly **can** reduce premature mortality due to heart illnesses, and we are committed to doing so. Heart disease should not remain an established early death sentence, in the realm of the medical progress we are striving for.

Honourable Audience,

The laying of this symbolic first stone, illustrates the power of partnerships across borders. I am convinced that years from now, the impact of our respective governments, philanthropist institutions, and committed individuals joining forces, for this equal access healthcare solution, will be felt throughout the region.

Indeed, **MY Heart Centre**'s model embodies the tangible headway that has been made in Rwanda's universal access to primary health care, including community health insurance.

We can never repeat it enough: the world is watching, and future generations will hold us accountable for the reality we are handing over to them, and we can only do that by answering the questions put to us by professor Magdi – Who cares? Who acts? And who pays?

I believe, **esteemed friends**, that these generations will applaud, and work towards, more healthcare models, like **MY Heart Centre's**, that combine the medical ability, scientific skills, and deeply humanitarian vision of people like yourselves.

Dear friends,

MY Heart Centre will address heart disease - a health crisis which often kills in silence. The steps we are taking today are opening newer and brighter horizons.

May this initiative, the building of **MY Heart Centre**, benefit in the years to come, from the extraordinary support of its sponsors, the efforts and attention of all stakeholders, and the trust of its future patients.

Indeed, I already look forward to the next time we can gather, to reflect on how much progress we will have made in containing this illness, and to celebrate the number of lives that will have been saved by then.

I thank you all for your kind attention, and may those of you that have crossed borders to be here with us, have a pleasant stay, and a safe return home.

I wish you all good health, peace, and a happy new year 2022!