

Her Excellency First Lady Mrs Jeannette Kagame

Remarks,

Commonwealth Heads of States' Spouses

Farewell Luncheon

Kigali, 25 June 2022

**Excellencies First Ladies, Dear Sisters, Dear Richard,
Esteemed Dignitaries, Distinguished Guests,
Commonwealth Friends of Rwanda,**

You all deserve a toast!

It is a different type of joy, to officially offer farewell, to you today.

To turn this page is bittersweet.

Despite the bitterness of closing a most fulfilling, and instructive chapter, there is sweetness in reminiscing on what was shared.

And share, we did. We have shared:

- Visions for accelerated development,
- We have shared strategies for strengthened unity within and between our countries,
- We have shared pledges to improve socio-economic parity across genders,
- We have shared a renewed commitment to achieve equity in healthcare, demanding action for the most pressing of women's health issues.

- We have shared jokes, and moments of pure sisterhood.
- We have shared tokens of friendship, and promises for lengthy kinship and collaboration.

Some of us, have in fact, cemented new friendships.

I wish to extend to Honorable Patricia Scotland, Baroness of Asthal, Commonwealth Secretary, whose husband is present with us today, sincere congratulations again!

I hardly know where to begin, to describe the pleasure that I have felt, re-discovering once more, how the leadership of a woman, can nourish the humanity of a world.

Honorable Patricia Scotland was born on an island, as you know, **Dear Richard**, and I, in a landlocked country. Had fate, and indeed history, chosen differently, we would likely never have gotten the chance to engage as we did.

But through the magic of the Commonwealth, of joining spirits, hearts and brains, under one deeply humane mission, our friendship has blossomed.

I hope for many years of sisterhood, and assure you both, **Mr Mawhinney**, an Honorary Home in Rwanda, so long as you desire it.

To the **First Ladies**, who honoured Rwanda with their presence this Commonwealth Members gathering, I thank you sincerely, and may the collaboration between our nations continue to improve all our lives!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This CHOGM meeting in Kigali meant perhaps more to Rwandans, than any of us know to express.

Before nations, vested in the development, of all countries that strive for peace, saw our commitment to progress and the wellness of our citizens, Rwanda couldn't truly open itself to the world.

But in all our efforts in overcoming the unimaginable, the Commonwealth has been watching.

The Commonwealth knows, that those who refuse to believe in the phoenix's rebirth, will still have to witness its flight.

We wish to soar into ever-blue skies with you all,
Commonwealth friends.

Thank you, **Commonwealth nations**, for trusting in our vision.

To your **Heads of Government, To your Dear Spouses, thank you** for bringing your esteemed delegates here, to either discover, or enjoy differently, the Land of a Thousand hills, The Land of a thousand opportunities, and the Land of Bright Beginnings.

I hope that with you on your journey home, nested in between your bags of coffee and your Rwandan crafts, are memorable **connections made this CHOGM, affection for Rwanda**, and hopefully, the desire to return to Rwanda.

We wish you all a safe journey back home.

Rwanda remains open for you next time!

Good day to you all!