

**First Lady Mrs Jeannette
Kagame's remarks at the IRCAD
Africa Gala Dinner | Kigali,
26 May 2022**

Honorable Minister of Health, Dr Daniel Ngamije,
Professor Jacques Marescaux,
Mrs Alice Marescaux,
Distinguished Members of the Business Community,
Esteemed Guests,

Good Evening!

Bonsoir, Chers Amis.

I am sincerely pleased to be here with you tonight. I hope you will understand if I occasionally address you all in Dr Marescaux's native French. While his English is flawless, his family's contributions to modern medicine, are worthy of hospitality, the world over.

Tonight, we dine among Innovative CEOs, Dedicated Dignitaries, Diligent Scientists and Expert Technicians, networking with true go-getters, that strive for the improved welfare of our nation.

And tonight, most importantly, **Honorable Guests**, we put our hearts, and our resources together to support IRCAD Africa in its noble mission.

To the **Friends of Rwanda**, who have understood the necessity of establishing a state-of-the art medical hub on our continent, welcome to Kigali, and welcome to the land of a thousand hills!

We hope that our city will be as hospitable to you, **Dear Friends**, as you have been committed to us.

Ladies And Gentlemen,

I am touched by the optimism, and determination perceivable tonight. After all, there is great cause for enthusiasm. That IRCAD Africa should find a home in Rwanda, might have been a “no-brainer”, as Dr Gillaume Marescaux, Vice President of IRCAD Africa, has graciously stated, but it is a great pleasure nonetheless.

For one, becoming a medical hub is for Rwanda an estimable destiny, that we will gladly attain, with the help of Friends of Rwanda and enriching cross-sector partnerships. May we walk hand in hand, **Dear Guests**, along this path to safe and affordable access to expert surgical treatments, for all Africans.

If I had one, I would raise my glass to everyone present tonight, for history has shown, that the training of medical staff is not just a noble cause, it is a crucial one. I also believe necessary to commend the progress of the construction of the IRCAD Africa Centre's new home in Masaka, a construction led by the Government of Rwanda, in support of this fantastic enterprise.

To watch in real-time as the walls of this Medical Centre of Excellence rise from our soil, has been a truly gratifying experience.

Honourable Guests,

There is little I could teach you about the benefits of minimally-invasive surgery, for experts in the field have graced us with their presence tonight.

The evidence in favour of minimally-invasive surgical treatments, for a variety of afflictions, ranging from tumor removal to heart surgery, has grown in pertinence, for decades.

- How can we tackle our growing population's need for appropriate medical treatments, for diseases old and new, and afflictions minor and great?

- How can we reduce, the death tolls reported by our hospitals following surgery, from the tragic numbers they stand at, to the unheard of?

Minimally-invasive surgery is an answer to both these questions. It serves as a safer, more precise, and less burdening means of conducting a variety of surgeries, many of which are life-changing, life-saving or critically time-saving.

By reducing the risk of surgical procedures, while maximizing their effectiveness, we diminish the devastating powers of a multitude of diseases, that eat at the lives of millions of adults and children every year.

Professeur Marescaux, Cher Nshuti,

Je vous remercie de réitérer l'importance de l'innovation et du progrès technologique - de la poursuite de nouvelles connaissances et de nouveaux outils - dans la construction de systèmes de santé résilients, à travers cette noble initiative.

La collaboration entre IRCAD et de prestigieuses universités locales, telles que notre Université Carnegie-Mellon (CMU Afrique), et notre Institut Africain pour les Sciences Mathématiques (AIMS), démontre l'étendu de votre vision.

We look forward to witnessing, IRCAD Africa, your promising impact on the progress of surgical medicine on our continent.

Honorable Dignitaries,

On a slightly different note:

I wish to point that investment in Africa is not charity. Investing in Africa's development is rational and wise!

Our future in terms of education, economic advancement and, as we are gathered here tonight to consider specifically, our Health sector, grows brighter by the second, with every investment in our welfare.

This one investment, **Dear IRCAD**, bears value beyond the immediate services that will be offered.

Access to medical tourism on the African continent, is for some, being granted a second-chance at a healthy life, that sometimes costly visa applications and lengthy flights could have compromised.

How pioneering, and forward-thinking, our Friends within and outside of Rwanda, are proving themselves to be! Thank you for trusting that we will apply the same dedication to enriching the IRCAD Africa Centre, as we have applied to maximizing the impact of every resource, that we have been blessed with thus far.

Dear Guests,

Every Franc raised by Rwanda and Friends of Rwanda to improve the welfare of our communities, will be honoured with a careful, judicious use.

But speaking of money, **Honorable Guests**, I must challenge you tonight, to a generosity contest. Rwanda is indeed open to the world, and to those that wish for the best for our country. We are open to your expertise, we are open to your resources, we are open to your love for your fellow human.

There are times where caution, and perhaps even restraint, are advisable. But this Gala, **Ladies and Gentlemen**, is not one of those. A donation, where the saving of lives is concerned, is never too generous.

- Who can truly quantify, what the betterment of one life is worth?
- Who can place a monetary value, on the reduction of 13% of the global burden of disease, with appropriate, minimally-invasive surgical training?

No amount of money could reflect the value of a mother with chronic back pain, regaining the ability to play with her child, or a father with heart disease being granted long enough life, to see his grandchildren born, and thriving.

Les bienfaits de cette cause sont inestimables.

Indeed, **Ladies and Gentlemen**,

The expert training of our doctors and engineers is a stepping stone, to the state-of-the-art medical systems, that we are determined to develop.

May we make each other proud tonight, by reaching IRCAD Africa's desired fundraising number, and I dare to hope, exceeding it.

It is not just that together we can; it is in fact that together, we will!

Je vous remercie encore, vous souhaite une bonne soirée, et à nos amis venus de loin, que votre séjour au Rwanda soit beau, et aussi chaleureux, que l'affection que vous portez pour notre pays.

Murakoze !