

Your Royal Highness the Queen of Buganda,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Philanthropists and Business Executives,  
Organisers of the African Philanthropy Forum,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning,

It is a great feeling to be among such an impressive group of dedicated individuals who continue to be trailblazers, that leave lasting footprints on people's lives.

Philanthropy, distinguished ladies and gentlemen is described as the "love of humanity" in the sense of caring, nourishing, and developing "what it is to be human", on both the part of the benefactors, and the beneficiaries'.

This Forum could not have come at a better time. It affords us the opportunity to reflect upon and address a topic that is personal and relevant in our world today. Philanthropy is something all of us can relate to, in one way or another, as we all reached out to make a difference in our communities, at some point in our lives.

## **Distinguished guests,**

Today, I stand before you as a person who has experienced both ends of philanthropy.

Those of you who are already familiar with the history of Rwanda know that we come from a very dark past; one that spiraled our country down into the abyss of despair and culminated in the senseless killings of over 1 million innocent men, women, and children in just 100 days. In 1994, Rwanda saw the sinister side of humanity.

There were hundreds of thousands of orphans, several widows, countless injured people, displaced populations, and a diaspora flooding back to a shattered land. Despite the terrible agony and sense of deep loss everyone carried in their hearts, countless people found within themselves the strength to put aside their pain and tend to those less fortunate than themselves.

In the aftermath of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, a group of self-less patriots pulled their will and resources together. Their hearts were heavy, their bodies were tired, but their spirits were not crushed.

At the time, no one had material resources – only will, time, energy, ideas and hope.

So we gave. We gave without a second thought. We gave that time, that energy, those ideas, and kept hope because this nation had to be rebuilt.

When I see today what our Nation has become, I cannot help but marvel at both the resilience of human nature and the philanthropic heart.

**Esteemed ladies and gentlemen,**

There are no strict dictates for philanthropy in Africa. For us it is simply, 'Ubuntu', or 'human-ness'. It reflects one's ability to recognize our shared humanity, to empathize and treat others, in a way that enhances mutual dignity.

In Rwanda, the notion of "Ubuntu" is deeply embedded in our culture. From time immemorial, it was quite common to see a wealthy Rwandan offer a cow to a less fortunate neighbour to "start them up" in the journey of self-sufficiency. We call this "kuremera".

Today, modern socio-economic programmes, including the government-initiated “one cow per family”, contributed to lifting one million people out of absolute poverty, in a short span of five years.

**Honourable invitees,**

This culture of “Ubuntu’ is what inspired the creation of Imbuto Foundation, my foundation. It started in 2001, under the name of PACFA, which stood for the Protection and Care of Families against HIV/AIDS. We began our philanthropic work focusing first on the HIV/AIDS epidemic, to help rebuild the lives of women, most of whom had been intentionally infected during the genocide against the Tutsi.

As our core mission expanded to adopt a more holistic approach, PACFA evolved into Imbuto Foundation in 2007.

And today, almost 15 years after embarking on this journey, to contribute to national development efforts, Imbuto is addressing other pressing needs. We are currently implementing 12 projects in the fields of education, health, youth and women’s empowerment.

Imbuto takes great pride in reaching new milestones, through our nationwide education programmes, that cater to the entire life cycle. Beginning with our early childhood development and family centres, to stimulate our youngest minds, and give them the best start in life; and a scholarship's project, which has supported over 6,000 brilliant, but vulnerable students.

But also new milestones that include the rewarding of over 4,000 Best Performing Girls, and the mentoring of orphaned genocide survivors, to develop a network of enabling relationships.

These initiatives do indeed speak volumes to the life-changing opportunities that philanthropy can, and must create.

**Esteemed guests,**

I believe that conversations, and the networking, that will take place within this African Philanthropy Forum hold tremendous potential, to create the bridges we need, to impact more effectively, the quality of life of the less-privileged.

In fact, we need more strategic partnerships between governments, corporations, organizations, and individuals, to help break the never-ending cycle of dependency, we sometimes witness. It is also very important, that we continue to engage recipients, to ensure they have the ability to articulate their needs, as we have to be conscious of the ever-changing dynamics on the ground, when adapting our philanthropic interventions.

Thus, we must think creatively for ways to improve our approach to philanthropic work, while always acknowledging the wealth of our cultural wisdom, and its ability to deliver the right solutions, to the challenges our continent faces.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Rwanda you see today has its foundations in the philanthropic acts of countless sons and daughters of this land, and of so many others, who chose to become our friends.

We have seen the great power of philanthropy. This system, that is built on our shared humanity, has managed to stitch our social fabric together, when other avenues supposed to

bring relief, sometimes failed to deliver on their promises.

So let us wholeheartedly pour ourselves, our resources, our wisdom, and collective experience, into our continent and our people.

Thank you all for having your hearts in the right place, thank you for endeavouring to stitch our social fabric back together, to repair what was weakened, and to continue reaching out to the most vulnerable populations.

To the organisers of the African Philanthropy Forum, thank you for bringing to Rwanda such an important, and unique platform, that points us to the future of development in Africa.

I thank you for your kind attention, and wish you more fruitful discussions.