

**REMARKS OF HER
EXCELLENCY MRS
JEANNETTE KAGAME**

UGHE HONORARY DEGREE ACCEPTANCE AND GRADUATION

Butaro, 25 January 2026

Honorable Prime Minister,

Honorable Ministers,

**Dr. Jim Yong Kim, Chancellor of the University of Global
Health Equity,**

My dear friend Didi,

Ophelia Dahl,

Bill and Joyce Cummings,

Esteemed Faculty and Staff,

Dear Graduates,

Distinguished Guests,

Parents, Friends and Families, present here today,

Muraho Neza!

**A very good morning to all, and my heartfelt congratulations to
our Graduates!**

- Thank you, Dr. Jim Yong Kim, for your kind and thoughtful words.
- It is a real pleasure to be with you here today, although the absence of Muganga Mwiza makes this graduation somewhat bittersweet, as we mark UGHE's first graduation of the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery program, and also the tenth anniversary.

- It is with mixed emotions that I receive this great gift—an honor, and a tribute to a true friend of Rwanda. To be honored in this way is a gift for which I can only find a few words...
Yet to be watched from heaven by a dear friend, as we celebrate those who have sought to honor his legacy through their own excellence, means that I must try.

(PAUSE)

- What a milestone!
- For a long time, solutions in our health systems were often seen as something that had to come from elsewhere. Today, we affirm a different truth: pain, disease, and avoidable death are not our destiny, and neither are we bound to wait for answers to arrive from afar..
- So, **Dear Graduates**, Your greatness is revolution in the making.
- Congratulations for choosing to lay your brick in the resilience of our systems. May your contribution to global health, and to the lives you will save and improve, bear witness to the worth of every late night of study, every moment of doubt, and every final push of determination.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- We knew someone who lived by this truth, giving selflessly from his own healing hand, his own wise heart, to help all those touched by his presence.

Dear Guests,

- I am deeply honored to receive the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humane Letters. I accept this honor with keen awareness of the responsibility with which it comes; reflecting on the shared commitment that brings us together today: **the belief that health is a fundamental human right, and that equity must remain at the center of how we educate, how we serve, and how we lead.**
- **There is no nobler cause, no greater act of love, than to protect and heal.**
- **In times where hostility and conflict have made their roaring return across the world, to heal, is to be a soldier of the good fight.**
- **How proud I am to speak among your ranks today with this deeply honoring gift.**
- Our Dear Friend, **Dr. Paul Farmer** may not be here with us in physical form to celebrate this achievement, but his presence is felt today, and will endure far beyond this moment, for this award is the result of his work, his faith in the brilliance and

drive of our youth, and his commitment to Social Justice and Health Equity.

- Muganga Mwiza was one of the rare believers in the inherent dignity and non-negotiable worth of **every** human being. One of the rare faithfuls, whose own incredible academic track record he refused to use as a token of moral or intellectual superiority over others, but as a testament to his responsibility to be of service.
- Doctor Farmer, how we miss you, how we welcome your light to shine through us all.

My dear friend Didi, Sebastian, Elizabeth, and Catherine

- Thank you for your strength, your grace, and your unwavering commitment, for always standing beside Dr. Paul Farmer, enabling his work to bear incredible impact in profound ways, and for continuing to embody the spirit, compassion, and moral courage that defined his life and work.
- We are grateful for you, for the altruism with which you have allowed us to consider him our very own angel in heaven, too.

Dear Guests,

- Let us never lose sight of the mission. Education is a lifeline. It gives us dignity and hope, and reminds us that our circumstances do not define our futures. Rather, it empowers us to shape those futures, with our minds and with our

hearts, while equipping us with the ability to adapt, to persevere, and to navigate life's ever growing uncertainties with resilience, wisdom, and purpose.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- We know to whom we owe our young graduates' engagement in this journey!
- Founded through Partners In Health, UGHE is indeed built on the principle that excellence in health education must go hand in hand with equity, and that leadership in medicine and public health should be grounded not only in technical knowledge and academic rigor, but also in compassion, justice, commitment, and inclusive services. Paul Farmer, along with his fellow visionaries in this calling, Ophelia and Jim Kim, believed deeply that **no one** deserves to receive second-rate institutions or second-best care.
- UGHE stands as a living expression of that belief: a holistic ecosystem of education and care, rooted in and accountable to communities too often left behind, affirming that excellence in health belongs to all.
- I thank the leadership, faculty, partners, and students of UGHE for your dedication and vision. I thank the Government of Rwanda for leading our country into a space that fosters shared global progress and makes possible the brilliance we celebrate today.

- Thank you once again for honoring me with this degree. I receive it with deep humility and gratitude, and with a profound sense of belonging to the University of Global Health Equity. I reaffirm my commitment to UGHE's mission and values, and I look forward to walking this journey together in service and to continue **bending the arc** towards equity, dignity, and health for all.

- **I thank you all for your kind attention.**