

REPUBLIC OF RWANDA



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

**Remarks by the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister
Dr Edouard Ngirente**

**At the official opening of the 5th International Conference on
Family Planning**

Kigali Convention Centre, November 12, 2018

- **Your Excellency Jeanette Kagame, the First Lady of the Republic of Rwanda,**
- **Your Excellency the First Lady of the Republic of Haiti,**
- **Honourable Ministers,**
- **Heads and Representatives of International Agencies,**
- **Distinguished Guests**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Good afternoon!

1. On behalf of His Excellency Paul Kagame, the President of the Republic of Rwanda, I am very delighted to join you all, at the official opening of this 5th International Conference on Family Planning that is taking place here in the City of Kigali. Our President wished to personally attend this important conference but was unable due to other commitments.

2. I wish to warmly welcome you to Rwanda. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has played a role in the organisation of this international conference.

3. I would like to thank you, Your Excellency Madam Jeannette Kagame, First Lady of Rwanda, for your presence in this event. This is a living testimony of your commitment and passion towards the improvement of the health sector, and social development in general.

- **Excellencies,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

4. A number of studies have indicated that family planning programs have a positive impact on economic development. There is a strong support that family planning is one of the most cost-effective ways of enhancing the well-being of the people in all countries.

5. We all converge to the fact that quality family planning services are strong means of improving the lives of women, children and families. Family planning is therefore not only a woman's issue. It is also a developmental issue. It affects all of us.

6. Moreover, as leaders, we need to be mindful that family planning alone will not address all development issues. We have seen cases of countries with a big population and low poverty levels and others with a small population with high levels of poverty. Our challenges, as leaders, is to keep implementing other development policies that complement family planning programs, bearing in mind that quality population is also an economic asset.

7. Some of these factors to complement family planning would include but not limited to: better planning, good governance, good attitude towards work, human capital development and especially Early Childhood Development Programs (ECDP).

8. These programs are kind of comprehensive approach meant for children from birth to eight years of age, their parents and caregivers. These programs strengthen children to develop their full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential.

9. As we all know, the main elements of the World Health Organization (WHO) definition of Family Planning are to attain the desired number of children and the spacing and timing of births. This means to plan for our families, which has to be an integral part of national planning for sustainable development.

10. In this regard, we need to build a society in which each family has the right to send each of their children to school, for each child to access health care, for each child to reach a greater prosperity for generations to come.

11. Purposeful family planning - the right for each couple to choose when they are ready to start a family and bring a child into a safe, healthy, and prosperous world - is a tool which enables each of us to achieve this dignified life for all of our people.

12. As we know, the African continent is very youthful with 406 million young people aged between 15-34, and 486 million children aged 0-14 years according to UN Population estimates. The population is projected to reach 2.4 billion by 2050.

13. In 32 African countries, more than 40 per cent of their population is below 15 years old. Similarly, some 11 million youth are expected to enter the African labour market every year for the next decade, as per the World Bank. By 2070, it is projected that Africa will have over 1 billion working-age youth and over 800 million children.

14. The biggest challenges facing African leaders today is how to harness our youthful population into agents of sustainable development. Investment in young people and in human capital, in general, can enable us to harness a demographic dividend across our continents.

- **Excellencies,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

15. In Rwanda, Various initiatives to support purposeful family planning programs are being implemented and some achievements have been registered over the past decade.

16. As a result, today we are a population that has increased our paediatric vaccination rates to over 90%, leaving no child behind and unprotected in the face of illness. Since 2000, our infant and child mortality rates have decreased by 70%.

17. Therefore, as a nation, we have gained great benefits from our investments in health and early childhood development. This is a result of investments in safer environments and care during pregnancy and beyond. With 16% of our current national budget allocated to our population's health, far surpassing our Abuja Declaration, we take the health and wellbeing of our people very seriously, as we see it as an investment in the security of our livelihood not only for today but also for the future.

18. Today, our children have access to basic education throughout the country, offering each child the opportunity to dream and develop into a leader of tomorrow. Because of this investment in the quality of life- in creating an environment of health and development and wealth for all- our life expectancy has increased. Today, a person born in Rwanda has the opportunity to reach more than 66 years.

19. Other initiatives include:

- The availability of family planning services in all villages;
- Expansion of existing information and dissemination programs about family planning to the general public;
- Introduction of long-lasting contraceptive methods in all health care facilities.

20. Our target is to increase contraceptive prevalence to at least 60% by 2024 as reflected in our National Strategy for Transformation, 2017-2024.

21. To achieve this target, the Government of Rwanda has put in place different strategies including:

- Establishment of the National Early Childhood Development Program (NECDP) that focuses on issues of stunting, malnutrition, early childhood education, sanitation, and hygiene with special attention on outcomes for infants during the first 1,000 days of life;
- Establishment of Community Based Health Insurance (Mutuelle de Santé) across the country. Today 90% of our population benefits from this scheme;
- Empowerment of women to become more economically productive which resulted in a tremendous reduction of women who are financially excluded from 32% in 2012 to 13% in 2016 according to the Finscope report of 2016;

- Increasing female enrolment in all levels of our education system which is currently at 50%;
- Ensuring equality between men and women in public service. Our Constitution provides that women occupy at least thirty per cent (30%) of positions in decision-making organs. In this regard, women represent 50% in Cabinet and 61% Parliament respectively.

- **Distinguished Delegates,**

22. Rwanda fully understands implementing all programs related to family planning is to invest for a Lifetime of Returns. We look forward to learning a lot from this conference on how we can better use family planning as an instrument for economic development.

23. I wish to especially urge participants to this conference to share experience, best practices and propose concrete actions to improve future family planning.

24. Before I conclude, I would like to thank once again organizers of this conference and all of you participants.

25. On this note, I wish to announce the 5th International Conference on Family Planning officially open.

Thank you!