

REPUBLIC OF RWANDA



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

Keynote address by the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister

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**At the Global Event on “Accelerating the End of Hunger and
Malnutrition.”**

Bangkok, Thailand, November 28, 2018

- **Your Excellency Vice President, of the Republic of Zambia,**
- **Your Excellency First Lady of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,**
- **Honourable Ministers,**
- **Director General of International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI),**
- **Assistant Director General of FAO,**
- **Chair, System Management Board, Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR),**
- **Distinguished Delegates,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

Good afternoon!

- 1.** I am grateful to the leadership and the people of Thailand for hosting this important conference, and for your warm hospitality.
- 2.** I also wish to thank the leadership of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), for having organised this global event.
- 3.** I am pleased to participate in this platform, one that seeks to address the burden of hunger and malnutrition and their impact on human capital and economic development.
- 4.** This conference presents great opportunities for peer learning and sharing best practices on strategies of how to end hunger and malnutrition globally. It is also a time to share progress made on the commitments to ending hunger and under-nutrition by 2025 and all forms of malnutrition by 2030.

5. Progress has been noted in many parts of the world but we still have a long way to go. The 2018 report on the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World indicates that number of hungry people in the world increased to 821 million in the year 2017.

6. In Africa the same report indicates that prevalence of undernourishment affects more than 256 million people, equivalent to 21% of the population.

7. These findings are not different from the 2017 FAO report that shows that about 27.4% of Africans were considered severely food insecure, which is considerably higher compared to other regions of the world.

8. To completely eradicate hunger and food insecurity per the African Union agenda 2063 has made nutrition a top priority. This will be achieved by modernizing our agriculture systems.

- **Distinguished Delegates,**

9. Let me share with you our Rwandan experience and context. In Rwanda, we still have issues of hunger and malnutrition, however we have made considerable steps towards resolving them.

10. Rwanda aspires to attain middle-income status by 2035 and human capital development is crucial to attaining this vision. Having a healthy and productive population requires putting appropriate policies that fight hunger and malnutrition at the centre stage.

11. I would like to share some initiatives we have put in place in Rwanda, learning from best practices around the world as well as home-grown solutions tailored from our context. To name a few of these initiatives:

- The Government of Rwanda is implementing the Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation, which is nutrition sensitive. It implements programs that aim at increasing the level of protein production and an increase of micronutrient production.
- The Crop Intensification Program aims at improving agricultural production especially food crops. Through this program, we have noted a growing trend in food crop production at 8% annual average in 2017.
- Land consolidation and soil erosion control has greatly influenced the status of food security. More than 1 million hectares of land has been consolidated and agriculture inputs subsidized to increase affordability and uptake. Investments in soil erosion control infrastructure have created employment opportunities for vulnerable households. Today, over 900,000 hectares of progressive terraces and more than 100,000 hectares of radical terraces were developed.
- Investment in irrigation schemes to increase food production. Presently more than 50,000 hectares of land used by small-scale farmers is irrigated as a support mechanism to reduce the vulnerability to changing rainfall patterns.

- **Excellencies,**
- **Distinguished Delegates,**

12. The above efforts have yielded improvements in food security in Rwanda. The number of total food secure households increased. Consequently, food consumption has improved across the country compared to the situation 3 years ago.

13. However, we still have unacceptable high levels of malnutrition and stunting, which is currently at rate of 35% among children. This situation has attracted high-level attention to put in place and implement policies and strategies that will holistically tackle the issue of malnutrition. Some of these strategies include:

- An Early Childhood Development (ECD) program championed by an institution dedicated to coordinating all activities aimed at eliminating hunger and malnutrition. Multi-sectoral Nutrition Committees at central and local government levels support this institution.
- Public-Private partnerships have played a key role in increasing investment in the production of nutritious food. Today, we are managing a joint venture between the Government of Rwanda and Africa Improved Foods Ltd (AIF), in producing baby nutritional foods for vulnerable groups including babies between 6 and 24 months as well as pregnant and lactating mothers from poor households. These Fortified Blended Foods are currently supplied over 14,000 women and more than 100,000 children in vulnerable categories.

- We developed a National Multi-Sectoral Food and Nutrition Policy, which we implement in collaboration with development partners in a multi-sectoral approach to address stunting.
- We deployed 58,000 voluntary community health workers in all villages to closely follow-up malnutrition cases and conduct awareness campaigns on improved maternal, infant and young child feeding practices.
- We established and supported One Cow per Poor Family Program since 2006. Today more than 300,000 cows have been distributed to poor families and the target is to ensure every poor household owns a cow to produce milk for home consumption, generate family revenues for extra milk sold and produce manure that support food production for the family. Besides this program, the Government also puts emphasis on the promotion of small livestock, the planting of fruit trees and school gardening programs.
- We also established a One Cup of Milk Program and so far, over 70,000 school children in poor areas are enrolled in the program. Milk supply in school has not only improved the nutritional status but also increased school attendance.
- We developed a kitchen garden initiative for each family, to encourage all Rwandans to have a garden of vegetables within their family compound.
- We established Parents' Evening Forums at the village level through which local community meet, once a month, and discuss among other issues nutrition and proper parenting.

- In order to increase graduation from poverty, Rwanda developed an integrated local development program that generates employment to poor people especially in public works at community level and, offers direct support to other vulnerable groups to such as the elderly to help cope with shocks.

14. Dealing with the malnutrition issues requires prioritizing care for expecting mothers and babies. It also requires the design and implementation of programs to ensure food security, adequate access to clean water supply, sanitation and hygiene.

15. Ending Hunger and malnutrition will, therefore, require concerted efforts of everyone including governments, development partners, citizens, civil society organisations, and researchers.

16. This conference is, therefore, an opportunity to learn from each other while exploring the required interventions that can create a long-lasting impact and I am looking forward to learning best practices from different experiences.

17. I once again thank the leadership and people of the of Thailand, the organisers of this conference and all of the participants here present.

I thank you for your kind attention