



REMARKS OF HER EXCELLENCY MRS JEANNETTE KAGAME

Giants of Africa Youth Forum



AUGUST 12, 2023
KIGALI

Honorable Dignitaries Here Present,

My Dear Friends Masai and Ramatu Ujiri,

**Retired Lt General Romeo Dallaire, Founder of the Dallaire
Institute for Children, Peace and Security,**

**Ishmael Beah, Unicef Goodwill Ambassador and Advisor to the
Dallaire Institute,**

Esteemed Guests, African Giants, Our beautiful youth,

Good Afternoon!

- Happy International Youth Day, and Welcome to this Youth Forum!
- The energy in this room today is truly electrifying! Thank you Giants of Africa for your incredible work these past two decades, and for bringing us here today.

Cherished Youth,

- We are starting an exciting week, which I hope to be rich in fun and joyful memories, yet we are also having, today, a somewhat loaded conversation.

- But I know this will not be a problem. The country we stand on today was built by the dreams and sacrifices of youth like yourselves, so I would never think any of you too young, to have the conversations that matter.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Hosting you all in Kigali is a blessing that seemed almost unimaginable three decades back.
- Safety, the right to exist, as an individual worthy of respect, and deserving of dignity, was a luxury dangled away from our reach for decades.
- Some said that Rwanda was small and hopeless, and destined to a small, hopeless fate.

- They didn't realise that greatness is in fact in the spirit, greatness is in the ambition; not in size, not in origin or past experiences.
- **They**, were blind to this obvious truth, because they were, and perhaps still are, classic "**haters**" indeed. But haters never win; not when there is almost an infinite power, to draw from love, and solidarity.

Dear Youth,

- These can be strange times for us all. News has made its way into all our homes suggesting that there is trouble all over.
- **Children of our Beautiful Continent**, what we want for you is quite simple: a steady, maintainable **onwards and upwards** for Africa.

- Good health, happiness, prosperity and achievement are what the youth deserves! So, good health, happiness and prosperity are what you must all pursue!
- I don't doubt one moment that you can claim all these blessings.
- You are compelling, you are engaging, you are dynamic, you are creative, you are daring, you are attuned to this rapidly moving world, as if you already know **some** of what it will take to navigate it successfully.
- It is true what is said - through interconnectivity, from, for instance, the internet, through improved education and access to information, our beloved youth appears to grow smarter by the day.
- And still, some teachings come from experience, more than they do from intelligence; just like in sports, much of your skill will come from your days, months, years of practice, and not only your talent.

- What we can offer you, in what will be quite the journey to being **“grown”**, as you call it, is the wisdom the years have given us.
- You see, some of us have been **“grown”** for quite a while, in some cases, for longer than we realize, until we are around fresh, youthful faces like the ones before me.
- It is a blessing in itself, to have lived long enough to see what could come of a suffering country, if the ingredients for success were used.
- And this is the knowledge I hope to leave with you guys today: what your own successes will take, irrespective of talent, regardless of luck.
- Determination. Discipline and good judgement. Team spirit. Victory through partnership. Collective efforts. Reliance on each other. Collaboration, shared ambition, friendship...all the values that have always guided strong performances in team sports.

- Together we must, together we will. This spirit should habit every heart of this continent.
- Never mind those who claim that greener pastures are only available across oceans. You come from a continent of unmatched resource wealth, and you are its greatest resource yet.
- If your path takes you elsewhere, may you be blessed with good education, health and fulfilment, and may you eventually use your blessings, to help uplift the homes, that prayed for your good fortune.
- You are gems of flesh, **Dear Youth**, but I still urge you to work on your polishing. Invest in your shine.
- Channel your competitiveness into being the most educated, the most well-rounded in the room.
- Be the voice of reason even in times of hostility.

- Refuse peer pressure and embrace peer support, for friendship and social engagement should lead you to an improved future, and not a compromised one.
- Have fun, but know that worthy fun, does not come at the cost of your health and well-being.
- Always defend peace, for there is never glory in avoidable conflict or blood spill.
- If you crave success or even authority, learn to dominate through excellence, **not** through bullying or oppression.
- The world has seen enough of our mistreatment of each other, of our nature, of our cultures.
- I know, that **you know**, that you can do better for our fates. **So do so!**
- Craft the better, kinder world we all want for you, and may this year's theme "**Green Skills for Youth: Towards a Sustainable World**", always inspire all our efforts, to be mindful, and respectful, of what is irreplaceable, our environment.

- Giants, I thank you for your attention. To the wonderful speakers that will surely offer us invaluable lessons, I am certain that our youth will turn the collective wisdom you will transmit, into wonderful, abundant successes.
- We shall be cheering them on, for as long as destiny allows. May this future be bright indeed.
- I wish you a good afternoon.