

First Lady Jeannette Kagame's Remarks
at the
Green Hills Academy Graduation Ceremony

15 June 2019

Kigali, Rwanda

Chairman of the Board,

Head of School,

Principals of the nursery, primary, middle school, and high school,

Esteemed Guest Speaker,

Members of the faculty and staff,

Esteemed parents, students, and alumni,

Class of 2019 'Ingenzi',

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is always a pleasure to be part of this crucial moment in the life of the GreenHills Academy; in the lives of our children – and their parents, as we gather to celebrate such an important milestone.

Today, we celebrate cherished members of our community, the graduating class of 2019 '**Ingenzi**' and this important stepping stone in their journey to adulthood.

Dear Graduates,

To see yet another group of students dressed up in their gowns and caps, ready to take the next step in their lives, fills me with so much joy - because I know that our country, and the world,

are gaining a group of young men and women, with a vast potential to become well-accomplished change makers, as already demonstrated by your different achievements, towards empowering our surrounding communities.

As exciting as this day is for you, I can also imagine that it can be a bit intimidating.

Turning a new page in the great book of your life, in most cases, means moving away from the people, and certain places with which you had become familiar, and had grown to love.

It means opening yourself up to a new and bigger world, which at times, will challenge you beyond your expectations.

It means learning to form new relationships, and new coping mechanisms vis-à-vis the new paths you will be following.

These processes are inevitable, if you are to grow into the strong men and women you are all destined to become; but I trust your experiences here at Green Hills Academy, driven by our motto **‘Towards Excellence’** have laid a strong foundation to help you navigate these new environments.

If carried on:

The **dedication and focus** you have applied to your class work and in managing diverse assignments, will enable you to confidently tackle future challenges.

The **discipline and great performance** you have displayed, especially on the sports grounds – bringing home several trophies – is the formula that you should continue to use, as you embark on this new journey.

The **compassion and selflessness** that inspired you to successfully implement charitable projects, such as the construction of the community library in Rwamagana; mobilising resources to support the 'Ijuru' community of former street children; and sharing your skills and time with the children at 'Love and Hands Teaching Centre' – will enable you to see those around you as equals, with the right to live quality lives.

This, in turn, should develop in you, the desire to identify the root causes of specific issues in our communities, and enable you to be innovative in devising truly impactful, and sustainable solutions. Solutions that will bring about the kind of just, and better world we are all entitled to live in.

Esteemed Parents,

I believe you stand with me in saying that this is indeed a proud moment. Perhaps some of you may even be letting out a sigh of relief, thinking “Thank the heavens our child has – finally – reached this day!”.

It was only yesterday that you held their hand on their very first day of school and later on today, they will walk out of here with a diploma in one hand and your hand in the other; walking into the very first day of a new chapter of their lives. So surely, this too, is your graduation.

The choices you have made so far have all left a lasting mark on your children. From the people you encourage your children to engage with; the environments you create and allow your children to experience; and systems you place your children in, to ensure they are given the right tools to blossom into grounded and exemplary individuals, able to make a positive impact around them.

Esteemed members of the faculty and staff,

I highly commend you for your efforts and passion, in continuously pushing your students, our children, to become the best versions of themselves.

Your dedication to developing their skills in the classroom, on the sports ground and elsewhere, allows them to grow, and discover their abilities and interests.

For this we are forever grateful.

'Ingenzi', Class of 2019,

As I conclude, it is my deepest wish that you are successful in all that you plan to do. It is also my hope that, when the time comes, you use what you have learned and achieved, to give back to your parents, your teachers, your communities and countries, as other GHA alumni have done before you.

Congratulations once again!

Thank you for your kind attention.