

First Lady Jeannette Kagame's Remarks at the

**YouthConnekt Champions and CYRWA Awards
Ceremony**

Kigali, 8 December 2017

Honorable Ministers,

Resident Coordinator of ONE UN Rwanda,

Valued Partners,

Esteemed Guest Speaker,

**YouthConnekt Champions and Young Rwandan
Achievers,**

Distinguished Guests,

Good Evening,

What a beautiful night it is going to be, as we all gather here, to celebrate, and honour remarkable young Rwandan achievers, as well as the organisations and enterprises, that continue to impact and benefit young people.

This year marks the 6th edition of the CYRWA awards, but also, the second time that we have partnered with the Ministry of Youth, to bring to you the YouthConnekt Champions and Celebrating Young Rwandan Achievers awards.

Tonight, as we recognise an inspiring and exemplary group of YouthConnekt Champions and Achievers, each with a unique approach of positively influencing the lives of Rwandan youth, I would also like to take a minute to recognize the partners who have been with us, throughout our journey towards the sustainable empowerment of our youth.

I would also like to thank you, Gayatri Datar, for joining us tonight and for sharing your personal journey, towards fulfilling your passion, for making a positive impact, in our communities.

Esteemed Guests,

With the YouthConnekt Champions and CYRWA awards, many more young people are inspired by their fellow youth, to follow their calling, and do more for all Rwandans.

To date, 37 young professionals have been rewarded for their creativity, intuition, and resourcefulness, by creating a change in their communities.

Some of those young men and women are here with us tonight, and through each one of them, is a representation of the leadership they exemplified, in the fields we have been rewarding since 2007. These young achievers present here tonight are:

- **Ines Mpambara**, the current Director of Cabinet in the Office of the President, who was awarded in 2007, for creating impact in the field of journalism and communication, through education.

- **Stephanie Nyombayire**, who was awarded in 2007, for her activism towards the prevention of genocide in the Darfur.
- **Diane Ngendo Karusisi**, the current Managing Director of Bank of Kigali, who in 2007, was awarded for fearlessly embracing the world of economics, and for sharing her knowledge through education.
- Also present with us today is **Diogène Ntarindwa**, more commonly known as '**Atome**', who in 2009, received an award for carving his own space in the wide world of arts.
- With us tonight is also the Chairman of the National Itorero Commission, **Edouard Bamporiki**, who in 2009, also moved us with his impact in the film industry.
- Also from 2009, we have **Jean-Pierre Nkuranga**, whose mentorship and inspiring work with youth

survivors of the Genocide, has helped many begin the healing process.

- From 2011, we have **Meilleur Murindabigwi**, who at a young age ventured into the news business and founded the Igihe platform, which now reaches millions of users on a daily basis.
- **Emmanuel Hitimana**, who in 2013, was awarded for his humanitarian work, that helped raise tens of thousands of dollars towards the Rwanda for Somalia Campaign.
- **Isabelle Kamaliza**, who also in 2013, was awarded for her social enterprise Solid’Africa, which provides hundreds of meals daily, and additional socio-economic support, to vulnerable patients in public hospitals.

- **Athanase Ruhumuriza**, who was awarded two years ago, for channeling all his energy into finding a solution for youth unemployment and created a school, that aims to impart skills in the arts, multimedia and ICT.
- **Kellya Uwiragiye**, a determined young woman recognized in 2015, whose passion and keen interest in sign language, has helped raise awareness about deaf and hard of hearing communities in Rwanda. Her work has helped to not only advocate, but to bridge the communication gap with sign language in media.
- **Dominique Uwase Alonga**, rewarded in 2015, for her **‘Imagine We’** community library, which helps contribute to the improvement of the reading culture in Rwanda, while empowering young people to become storytellers.

- **Cephas NSHIMYUMUREMYI**, a teacher rewarded in 2015 for creating a whole line of cosmetics from soaps to creams, using different kinds of herbs, and for availing internship opportunities to young people.
- And last but not least, **Dr Alice Niragire**, who is a new mom, and who, at the age of 33, became the first Rwandan female surgeon, whose passion for medicine inspired other girls and young women, to pursue an education and a career, in what is often perceived as a field reserved for men.

Tonight, 10 more will be joining them.

Dear YouthConnekt Champions and Young Rwandan Achievers,

This evening's celebration will be a testament, just like it was for your predecessors a few years ago, that your passion, ambition, and hard work, did not go unrecognized, and that through you, we see the limitless abilities of our young men and women to develop something, that will inspire generations to come.

Distinguished Guests,

These talented and exceptional youth that I speak of, have in many ways inspired and opened the door for those that will be awarded here tonight. Indeed, Young Achievers and YouthConnekt Champions who dared venture into fields that may have seen out of their reach, remind us that there are no limitations to those who set their sights on a noble

cause, and who seek to change our communities for the better.

As I conclude my remarks, I would like to congratulate all the nominees, and their achievements that will be celebrated tonight.

As we honour you tonight, remember that you are indeed the personification, and proud examples of why we believe that youth empowerment is more than just a concept, but rather a force for positive change in itself.

My wish to all the nominees is that these recognitions, will encourage you to keep nurturing your passion, and abilities to bring to this world much-needed innovations, while setting the bar high, for many more, will surely follow in your footsteps.

I thank you for your kind attention and wish us all a great evening in the midst of our youth ingenuity.