

**Honourable Minister,  
Excellency Ambassador,  
Founders and Board Members of Team Heart,  
President of the University of Massachusetts,  
Honourable health professionals and partners,  
Esteemed corporate representatives,  
My fellow Rwandans,  
Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,**

**Good evening.**

It is gratifying being with all of you tonight, gathered in Boston, a city with a long history of partnership, friendship, and collaboration with Rwanda, in our journey to self-reliance, urgency, and restoration of our dignity, joining hands in the efforts aiming to strengthen our nation.

Our coming together for this fundraiser for the first cardiac centre in Rwanda is indeed an exciting moment, because it carries the potential of a great leap forward, for the Rwandan health sector, and that of the region.

And when the power of healing meets the power of solidarity to give a new pulse to human hearts, it is a moment well-worth rejoicing in.

**Esteemed Team Heart and partners,**

You have understood the principle behind our nation's dedication to seeing our communities living dignified lives, in the best economic and health conditions.

You came, you saw and you acted.

You did so in a respectful manner, acknowledging the nuances needed when offering one's support, while recognizing that the other, even when wounded, is still a human being, with his or her own dignity.

As a people that experienced apathy in the face of suffering, and the worst failure of humanity, losing all faith in international institutions twenty-two years ago, your actions truly stand as the kind that help restore faith in humanity. You help further prove that, after all, the philosophy of being 'my brother's keeper' is still alive.

We are grateful to those who walked by our side, put trust and faith in us, when all odds seemed to be against us.

Your work over the years is truly commendable and has saved the lives of many – some of whom are present in this room tonight – allowing them to thrive and pursue their education and dreams of their own, sharing their gifted

nature with those around them, as some of your former patients have demonstrated through their accomplishments.

We are thankful to your organisation, for having joined in the efforts of the Government of Rwanda, and its civil society, in helping address some of the most critical health issues, still faced in our land.

Indeed, the relevance of such issues as cardiovascular diseases cannot be downplayed. Evenings like this one, dedicated to raising funds to build a cardiac centre, also serve as a reminder that prevention, and treatment, of heart diseases, will ensure that they do not become a major cause of premature death, and disabilities in Rwanda.

### **Distinguished guests,**

Following these darkest times in our history, Rwanda was left as a nation struggling to rebuild its institutions and infrastructure, destroyed by the fleeing genocidal regime.

The status of our health was greatly shaken, literally and figuratively, as our nation was deeply diseased.

In the midst of all the despair, we looked at death in the eye and chose to live, and with no blueprint guiding our

reconstruction efforts, we focused our vision for a brighter future, on restoring the overall health of our nation.

With this defying vision, we implemented programmes that catered to our legal, economic, environmental, health, and socio-cultural needs and through time, helped our nation meet international development goals, fulfilling all but one of the Millennium Development Goals.

Rwanda remains as determined as ever to address challenges facing our nation in the health sector, by increasing training skills and education opportunities, while empowering communities with knowledge about health issues affecting them, encouraging prevention, and seeking medical care, especially today when universal health insurance allows everyone to do so.

**Honourable guests,**

The past 22 years drove major health reforms, such as the universal public, medical insurance coverage, known as ***Mutuelle de Santé***; the set-up of a network of 45,000 trained community health workers, who provide primary care and also support health institutions, by counselling members at the community level, to seek the right medical treatment, in a timely manner.

In the same vein, the active mobilisation and awareness raising of health professionals and stakeholders, led to significant improvements, such as:

- increasing the number of hospitals and health centres;
- achieving universal vaccination;
- focusing on maternal and child health leading to a 90% rate of women receiving prenatal care;
- adding more than 20 years to life expectancy;
- and more recently, the innovative approach to delivering blood and medical supplies in the region, through the use of drones

Last but not least, our aim is to continue to build the right partnerships with public or private entities – Team Heart is undoubtedly one of them – to further solidify the gains we have made for our people.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Today, Rwanda is known for its stability, security and growing economy. We credit these achievements to the commitment of countless individuals, who spared no efforts in devising locally-designed programmes, and carefully adapted strategies, to answer crucial challenges.

**Esteemed Team Heart and partners,**

As I conclude my remarks, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the time and efforts, you have all invested, in bringing together such a diverse crowd tonight.

It is reassuring and heart-warming to see all of you, health professionals, scholars, corporate representatives, businessmen and women, students and others, feeling concerned with a situation happening thousands of miles away from your home, and coming out in droves, to offer your kind support.

**Distinguished guests,**

I will end by extending an invitation to all of you, to come and discover, or re-discover our homeland, with its rich culture, traditions and people. You will be able to see with your own eyes, the fruits of your investment, while enjoying the distinctive features of the Rwandan nation.

I thank you for your kind attention, and wish you a pleasant evening.