

**Your Royal Highness the Queen of Buganda,
Honourable Minister,
Honourable Member of Parliament,
Chief Executive Officer of the END Fund,
Esteemed health professionals and partners,
Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen,**

Good afternoon.

It is my great pleasure to be joining you for this event on ending neglected tropical diseases to help our continent achieve greater economic growth, and prosperity in the coming years.

Having this conversation, as part of the World Economic Forum on Africa, speaks volume to the commitment of public and private stakeholders, in shining more light to health issues, still affecting over 1 billion people, and their ability to fully contribute to the development of their communities.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

In a world fast evolving and creating new solutions to various health, environmental, socio-economic problems, while connecting people through technology, it comes as a sad irony that such a large population of our planet still struggles with diseases that should have been eradicated a long time ago.

The figures of the number of people affected worldwide each year, by these various tropical diseases are indeed alarming: 1.6 billion have had at least 1 tropical disease, and 500.000 die each year from complications linked to these diseases.

As other health issues affecting children and young people, and impacting their future ability to fully participate in the socio-economic activities of their countries, one can also foresee the consequences on the economic development of each nation, battling these diseases.

Esteemed organisers and guests,

It has been almost 10 years since Rwanda started its NTD Programme, to improve the prevention and treatment of these neglected parasitic, bacterial, and viral infectious diseases, by mapping them, conducting nationwide awareness campaigns, along with mass drug administration.

Thanks to concerted efforts between public and private entities, including our partnership with the END Fund, we have seen a decrease in the number of people affected by these infections over time, and are now considering only two NTDs to be a public health problem in Rwanda.

I believe that for our communities to pave the way to a future free from these health issues, we must therefore continue educating our populations on how to protect themselves, but also further invest in strengthening institutions for more efficient health care systems, able to respond rapidly to this kind of crises.

I trust that conversations like the one that brought us together on this day, will help create a stronger sense of our shared responsibility in fighting these diseases, while implementing strategies that can significantly empower our communities to fully thrive, to live the kind of dignified lives, we all so rightfully deserve, irrespective of our cultural or economic backgrounds.

I thank you for your kind attention and wish us all fruitful discussions.