

Her Excellency Mrs. Jeannette Kagame
Remarks
Green Hills Graduation Ceremony
June 1st, 2013

Honourable Minister,

Chairman of Green Hills Academy Board,

Ron Wallace Green Hills Academy Headmaster,

Alpana Mukherjee Secondary School Principal,

Administration, faculty and staff,

Fellow parents,

Graduating Class of 2013,

Good morning.

It is refreshing to be among the youth this morning at the 11th Green Hills Academy secondary school graduation ceremony. I am especially proud of the 52 graduates who have surely worked very hard to reach this important milestone in their young lives. Congratulations! Felicitations! Tubahaye impundu!

It is remarkable when we pause for a moment to reflect on how far Green Hills has come. After the 1994 genocide there was a need to cater to the education requirements of many English speaking Rwandan returnees, by providing an English school. And so, in

1997 Green Hills Academy was born. As you all know, from our history Rwanda has developed into a bilingual country and so the school grew to accommodate both English and French speakers.

When we first started, we had just 7 students and the school was at Nyarutarama Tennis Club. There were no books or scholastic material; everything had to be purchased outside of Rwanda.

We have encountered and overcome different challenges and here we are - 16 years down the road – and I think you would agree with me that we have also reached an important milestone, as a learning institution.

We have grown from 7 to around 1,500 students; we can be proud of a school that offers an international program (both the Cambridge and International Baccalaureate diplomas) more specifically, in a national setting. We offer a unique half French and half English curriculum from Nursery to Grade 8 with German as an additional language; and of course Kinyarwanda. This has helped open doors for our students to English, French, and German speaking universities.

Our thinking is guided by our motto *Towards Excellence*, so we are always looking for ways to improve our school. We have just completed a new Biology Lab; construction of a Chemistry and

Physics Lab is also underway. Our board is busy finalising plans to offer a boarding option and a swimming pool. We are also quite pleased to be in the advanced planning phase for a new Grade 1 to 4 Primary school, to be built close to the Nursery.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We believe that education on its own is not enough to shape the kind of citizens we envision for Rwanda. Recently, Green Hills joined the Round Square, an international association of secondary schools in the English Speaking world. This association will offer our students opportunities to grow in character as well as academically. Round Square promotes six IDEALS of learning: Internationalism, Democracy, Environment, Adventure, Leadership and Service. ¹

As we were told earlier the graduating class of 2013 has been involved in buying food for an orphanage in Kamonyi district, raising 614,170 Rwf for the Agaciro Development Fund and participating in Umuganda, our monthly community service activity. As you can see our students are growing into responsible citizens. As Jean Michel said, they are giving back to their community.

¹ <http://www.roundsquare.org/> :Round Square is a UK registered charity that promotes in young people a commitment, beyond academic merit, to personal growth, and responsibility through service to others and through practical, experiential learning

Class of 2013,

As you spread your wings and move on from Green Hills Academy, I wish you the best of what life has to offer, and if you thought you were free from homework at least for some time, I want to give you some but it will be fun:

- I want to encourage you to develop good habits. Take good care of your bodies, live healthy lifestyles because as someone once said: “If you don’t take care of your body, where will you live?”
- Stay curious; keep your sense of wonder. Never stop learning. Be it through reading, volunteering or taking on an internship.
- Use your Twitter, Facebook, and Youtube skills in a positive way. Tell the world the good things that are happening in Rwanda; both international and Rwandan students (and teach your parents how social media works, this can be counted as community service). Don’t you want your parents to have swagger and be cool?
- Wherever you go, remember where you came from and stay true to your roots. Be the custodians of our culture.

I can see that the girls outnumber the boys in this class. That mere fact may seem trivial, but just a few years ago it was very difficult for

girls to attend school. So young ladies, I want to tell you that we hold a special place for you in our hearts. The ground has been leveled and you have used the opportunities effectively. With equal opportunities we have seen that girls can do just as well as boys.

As a mother of 3 boys and 1 daughter, you can be sure that there is enough room in my heart for the boys too. It is a good time to think of the men you want to become. Know that if the path is well navigated, it will create a good foundation for you to be solid shields for your families and nation. With your sisters, if you put your strengths together nothing can stop you from achieving your dreams.

Let me end by extending my appreciation to all parents for entrusting the education of your children to us. As parents, we hold in our hearts a great sense of fulfillment that the sacrifices made to give you the best possible opportunity have not been in vain. To the teachers and the team leader, we cannot thank you enough for the attention and mentorship you gave our children and we are grateful to you for motivating them to learn and grow.

We look forward to seeing our youth take their rightful places of leadership in Rwanda and beyond.

Once again, Happy Graduation Day! Thank you for your attention.