

- **Honourable Minister of Education,**
- **Mayor of Bugesera,**
- **Headmistress of Maranyundo Girls School,**
- **Sister Anne Fox,**
- **Friends of Rwanda,**
- **Distinguished guests,**
- **Staff and Students of Maranyundo Girls School,**

Good morning,

Two years ago we gathered here to celebrate the establishment of a school, borne out of the commitment and enthusiasm of the Maranyundo Initiative – a group of US-based Friends of Rwanda, who believed that if they educated Rwandan girls, they would be building a nation.

I am happy to see that once again, we are back here to celebrate the continued success of this school. Importantly, in the spirit of promoting sustainability, we are here to witness the transfer of Maranyundo Girls School from the Maranyundo Initiative to the Benebikira Congregation and the Bugesera community.

I believe that the Benebikira Congregation, with their sterling record in education, will be outstanding custodians of this centre of excellence, aimed at educating Rwanda's women leaders of tomorrow.

Igikorwa gikozwe uyu muni, ni inshingano ikomeye Umuryango w'abenebikira uhawe; nubwo tuzi ko mwakoze byinshi, iyi ni inyongera nziza ku kazi kanyu ariko kandi icyi ni icyizere mugiriwe nubwo tuzi neza ko muzabishobora kuko uburambe mufite mu bikorwa byinshi byubaka burabibemerera kandi turabibashimira. Uburere n'uburezi by'umwana w'umukobwa, noneho kubwanjye, kubishinga abantu nkamwe, b'abihayimana b'ababikira ndumva ari amata yabyaye amavuta. Igihango mugiranye na Maranyundo Initiative kizere imbuto nziza kandi nyinshi. Nanjye mbijeje uruhare rwanjye.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to share with you my thoughts on the significance of this event.

Today illustrates the union of the best of Boston and Bugesera; an experience enriched by the Maranyundo Initiative reaching out to provide opportunities to open-minded Rwandans willing to learn and in so doing, improve their lives. The world today is one global village, rich with diversity. Those who understand this and take full advantage of its benefits will certainly go far. We have seen this happening over the last two years, as demonstrated by the extraordinary partnership between the Maranyundo Initiative and the Benebikira Congregation – both driven by their commitment to creating an all-round, high quality education for girls.

Much like Maranyundo School started out as a vision, our country also has a vision and goals it is working very hard towards. An integral part of this vision is educating and developing one of Rwanda's most important resources – its people. Maranyundo Girls School, by its very nature, plays an important part in Rwanda's efforts at making the advancement of its people a reality.

In addition to education, ending poverty and hunger is a key priority of government. If we are to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, we must ensure we do so by educating all our people irrespective of gender. Through their education, the young girls today will play a significant role in transforming for the better, the lives of their families and communities.

Another aspect of Rwanda's vision towards growth and development is the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. Through the efforts of Maranyundo Girls School, young girls who may never have had the chance at receiving an education are now being given the opportunity to learn from some of the best educators from the United States and Rwanda. I cannot over - emphasize the responsibility we all have to ensure we enrol more girls into schools and institutions such as this one.

The government is also committed to combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. I trust that the students of this school will be

educated on the dangers of HIV/AIDS, and how to protect themselves from other risks, such as early marriages and unwanted pregnancies.

Distinguished guests,

Let me also take the opportunity to mention that yesterday, Rwanda launched the National Accelerated Plan for Women, Girls, Gender equality and HIV/AIDS. This four year plan will serve to help overcome the unique challenges and barriers which increase women and girls' vulnerability to and risk of HIV in Rwanda. I encourage you to get involved in this important activity and continue making contributions to the empowerment of Rwanda's women.

To the young girls, I want to remind you that you are not here by chance; you have been deliberately selected to learn and grow, to develop your God-given potential and be the torchbearers that will light the way for generations to come.

I cannot end without thanking the Maranyundo Initiative for their dedication and contribution to the excellence of Rwandan girls' education.

Thank you!