

Official Opening of Rwanda Library Services and
Reading Day Competition Campaign

Remarks by H.E Jeannette Kagame
First Lady of the Republic of Rwanda
Kigali, Thursday, 21st June 2012

- **Honourable Ministers,**
- **Members of the diplomatic corps,**
- **Members of parliament,**
- **Members of the Rotary Club, Kigali Virunga,**
- **ONE UN Family**
- **International Partners of the Kigali Public Library Initiative,**
- **Distinguished Guests,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Good afternoon,

It is a pleasure to be here with you all this afternoon, as we witness the reality of a dream that begun more than ten years ago, started by the Rotary Club of Kigali – Virunga. Over the years, many people bought into this dream, to establish Rwanda's first ever public library. From government to members of Rwanda's business community and to individuals from abroad – the opening of this beautiful facility today is the result of a dedicated vision shared by many who are committed to building a culture of reading in Rwanda.

I believe that this is the first of many libraries which will be built in this country, creating a safe and creative space upon which we can build a culture of reading amongst Rwandans – young and old. A library of this magnitude is a welcome addition to ongoing national efforts such as the annual Reading Day, organised to promote the culture of reading and writing in Rwanda. Imbutu Foundation launched its first Reading Competition themed **"Today a reader – tomorrow a leader!"** in

2011, with the aim of stimulating a culture of reading and writing; making this a valuable habit for Rwandan youth. This year, One UN in partnership with Imbuto Foundation will mark the 2nd reading day competition campaign, part of which will take place at the library today.

Ladies and gentlemen,

A public library is often called “a people’s university” because it is available to all, regardless of age, skill level, or ability to pay. Today, we have witnessed this, based on the children and adults we have seen reading in the library as we toured around. It is a calm yet busy place which encourages people to come, read, meditate and interact, leading to an emerging community of readers.

I was also pleased by the ICT component that is a key feature of this public library. This element connects library users to the world at large, opening up a world of possibilities especially for our youth, in building their reading skills and learning from their peers globally – the benefits that come with a reading culture.

In this contemporary world, it is general knowledge that ignorance and poverty are the enemies of sustainable development. We in Rwanda are cognizant of this, and fighting ignorance and poverty through the cultivation of a reading culture is part of our development agenda.

The Rwanda Library Services is beautiful and special, but it is much more than a building filled with shelves of books – it is a gateway, a window to the world. On the pages of countless books are opportunities for our youth to create a limitless universe, one where they satisfy their

curiosities and feed their imagination, all the while developing personal values and defining their relationships with the world.

Young people today constitute the majority of Rwanda's population. It is therefore critical that youth today embody the culture and passion of reading. This passion for reading is not merely a hobby, but a culture that we as parents must instill in our children – and one way of getting there is through the utilization of the services offered by this public library. The culture of reading is a starting point and a solid foundation on which to build a better tomorrow, and is the foundation to prepare our youth to take on the challenges of leadership.

Distinguished guests,

I look forward to the ways in which Rwanda Library Services will connect people to information and ideas. I also look forward to the ways in which this library will develop ways in which to serve Rwandan youth developmentally, academically, and socially, as public libraries are a natural gathering space for youth.

Allow me to thank the Government of Rwanda; the Rotary Club Kigali-Virunga; members of the donor community; members of the Rwandan private sector and civil society, and individuals from within Rwanda and abroad – all whose commitment and generosity has paved the way to a facility that has the potential to empower the minds of Rwanda's youth and its community members. Thank you very much.

I would like to end by encouraging well wishers and partners interested in this endeavour to work even harder and contribute to the reinforcement of a reading culture in Rwanda.

It is my pleasure, therefore, to declare Rwanda Library Services officially open on this Friday 5th of October, 2012.