ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT PAUL KAGAME

74th United Nations General Assembly

New York, 24 September 2019

The international community stands at a crossroads. The 2020s could be remembered in history as a turning point, or as the moment when multilateralism lost its way.

Fortunately, the path forward is clear. Never before have we had such well-defined roadmaps for joint action on development, climate change, and global health.

I therefore congratulate the Secretary-General and his team, as well as the President of the General Assembly, for the relevance of this week’s high-level events.

The transformational potential of Universal Health Coverage is now at the top of the global health agenda. This is thanks to the outstanding leadership of the World Health Organisation and many other stakeholders.

In Rwanda, more than 90 per cent of the population has insurance coverage. This has contributed to significant improvement in health outcomes. It shows that it is possible for countries at every income level to make health care affordable and accessible for all. We must also commit to replenishing the Global Fund and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.
These are not things that should or can be done on Africa’s behalf. The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals are also Africa’s goals. Africa has the means, and it is our responsibility.

That is why the African Union continues to strengthen its capabilities and effectiveness. Next July, for example, trading will commence under the African Continental Free Trade Area, the world’s largest.

But Africa continues to lag behind other regions on the Sustainable Development Goals. This is despite the fact that our continent is home to several of the fastest-growing economies in the world. Growth must be fully inclusive so that inequality within countries continues to diminish.

The fundamentals needed to unlock this transformation are already in place. With a concerted push involving all partners, including the private sector, it is indeed possible to make up for lost time with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Closer cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations is streamlining the implementation and measurement process. This good partnership will continue to grow deeper.

All around us, we see the urgency of fulfilling our commitments to slow the pace of global warming and adapt our infrastructure to a changing climate. One key lesson of yesterday’s Climate Action Summit is that innovative technologies and approaches allow us to act without slowing economic growth.
Perhaps the most impactful action countries can take is to ratify and fully implement the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol.

Security and stability are the prerequisites for rapid progress toward a more equitable and prosperous world. It is essential for Africa and the rest of the international community to work closely together on peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts, with mutual respect.

In the coming weeks, Rwanda is preparing to receive and protect a number of refugees and asylum-seekers from detention camps in Libya. The support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the African Union is greatly appreciated.

We call on every member of the United Nations to uphold their legal obligations in a spirit of solidarity. This partnership is a clear sign that we can cooperate to address complex problems. Africa itself is also a source of solutions.

There is no doubt that the challenge of global inequality can only be addressed by working together. Rwanda stands ready to do our part.

That includes guaranteeing the rights and opportunities of women and girls. I therefore take this opportunity to invite you to Kigali in November for the Global Gender Summit.

Thank you for your attention.