INNOVATION DRIVING UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

New York, 25 September 2019

- Right Honourable, Thomas Thabane, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho
- Dr Paul Farmer and Dr Jim Yong Kim, Co-Founders of Partners in Health
- Sheila Davis, CEO, Partners in Health
- Marisol Touraine, Board Chair, Unitaid
- Lelio Marmora, Executive Director, Unitaid
- Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Good evening.
Let me begin by thanking Partners in Health and Unitaid, for the kind invitation to address you today.

Rwanda has worked closely with Partners in Health and Unitaid in building our health system, with very good results.

So I also want to express my appreciation to you for the very meaningful partnership, that has had such a positive impact on the lives of Rwandans.

Rwanda’s health outcomes are undoubtedly due to innovation.

In fact, Rwandans embrace innovation.
Rebuilding a country almost from scratch, without a user manual, you look at risk differently.

The mind is open to solutions.

For the last 25 years, we have looked for ways to mobilise our citizens by empowering and educating them to improve their health.

The deployment and training of nearly 60,000 volunteer Community Health Workers, one for every 40 families, has helped improve access to care within communities.

Community Health Workers play a particularly significant role in child and maternal health.
Rwanda’s Community-Based Health Insurance, together with other forms of insurance, now cover over 90 per cent of our population.

Universal Health Coverage has become the bedrock of our health system.

These are not technological innovations.

But it would be impossible to build an effective health system, without citizens who understand what is at stake, and who trust the system enough to use the available services.

In other words, you can do a lot to improve health with old-fashioned methods.
But you can do so much more with technology and digitalisation. That is the direction that Rwanda, and other countries, are headed in.

We are counting on ICTs to help scale up coverage, improve quality, and reduce costs.

The government of Rwanda has adopted several digital initiatives to improve service delivery and monitoring, and is supporting private sector initiatives that add value to our national health care system.

Today, Community Health Workers are equipped with mobile phones, so they can instantly share vital patient information with health professionals.
One of the tangible benefits of this system, is significantly improved malaria detection and treatment, leading to a 30 per cent drop in malaria mortality.

The Health Ministry’s e-learning program, combines online distance learning with in-person training for health workers, providing flexibility in terms of the location and pace of learning.

This program also cuts down on costs and absenteeism, because health staff access learning materials right from their work-stations.

Rwanda’s partnership with Zipline, launched in 2016, was a milestone.
Through this initiative, commercial drones provide doctors with rapid access to life-saving medical products, such as blood and vaccines, bypassing the obstacles of transport and safe storage.

Currently, about 60 deliveries are done every day, to 25 hospitals and health centres across the country, with the goal of reaching 100 sites by the end of the year.

Looking forward, the Rwanda Social Security Board is working to acquire capabilities in data analytics, to improve operational efficiency.
Rwanda has been fortunate to have good partners, in the journey of healing our social fabric, and setting up national systems that deliver results to our people.

The use of innovation and technology will ensure that we continue to meet the expectations of Rwandans, and do our part in building a more equitable world.

Thank you once again for convening this important event.

I thank you.