



**Talking points for UNICEF Representative
“Pitch Night” Opening remarks**

Wednesday, 17 May 2017
College of Business and Economics, Gikondo

Mwiriwe neza / good afternoon /
Nitwa Ted Maly, Representative of UNICEF Rwanda

Claire Akamanzi, CEO of Rwanda Development Board
Michael Adjei, Managing Director of Airtel Rwanda
Government officials
Members of the diplomatic community
Partners, media, and youth

Thank you for joining us today as we celebrate the innovation and entrepreneurship of Rwanda’s youth. I would like to especially welcome the students and young innovators present in our audience.

The idea of Pitch Night came from another event UNICEF and K-Lab organized with school children in 2015 – the “Hackathon.” At the Hackathon, participants presented a number of innovative solutions for children and on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. This motivated us to do more to inspire entrepreneurship and innovation. And inspired us to partner with Airtel to organise Pitch Night, with technical support from the Ministry of Youth and ICT.

UNICEF and Airtel share strong values in social responsibility; we both care deeply about finding solutions that tackle issues that affect young people such as education and health. These shared values provide a great opportunity for partnership.

Innovation has driven tremendous progress for children, not only by helping reach the most remote and disadvantaged communities, but also by giving those communities and children new ways to make their voices heard.

We all know that innovation is not new to Rwanda. Just last week at the Transform Africa Summit, we saw many inspiring examples of innovation at work. And I don't just mean start-ups, but projects that are already under implementation. For instance, we have Patrick Bucyana here with us. Patrick took the "Tap and Go" cashless payment system for public transportation across borders. He has replicated it in two other African countries, with plans to expand further. This is the kind of entrepreneurial spirit we need to encourage and support.

I would also like to commend the leadership of the Government of Rwanda for opening up opportunities like these in ICT and innovation for the young people of Rwanda.

And I believe Pitch Night, an interactive competition which showcases the business ideas of youth competitors, fits well with the opportunities and programmes initiated by various partners and Ministry of Youth and ICT.

Putting these technologies to work, making these investments, helps us reach the unreachable. And that helps us support the development of the nation. I'm really looking forward to hearing about the solutions today which advance development solutions for Rwanda, be it in health, education, or environmental sustainability.

This event gives a voice to the ideas young people have to shape their own future.

I hope that this competition will be valuable not only to the winning business, but to all of the young entrepreneurs in the audience today.

I want to personally encourage all of you to keep dreaming and reaching for your goals, and to search for ways to transform your ideas into tangible action.

Pitch Night doesn't stop today. Following the competition, the winning entrepreneurs will receive further coaching during an incubation period; they will further develop their ideas and strengthen their skills. We're very excited to see the winning idea become a reality in a few short months.

We are thankful to our partner Airtel who has helped us make this event a reality, and we look forward to many more successful endeavors together.

Under the leadership of the Government of Rwanda, we will continue to ensure that all children and adolescents have the opportunity to grow into the great potential they possess.

Murakoze cyane. Thank you very much.