

**MY SPEECH AT THE INAUGURATION
CEREMONY OF THE EUROPEAN CANCER
INSTITUTE IN BINGERVILLE**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am happy to be with you this morning for the inauguration of the European Cancer Institute (ECI) in Bingerville.

First and foremost, I would like to convey warm greetings on behalf of my dear husband, the President of the Republic.

I would also like to extend warm greetings to my sister, Mrs. Maïmouna Kone, wife of the Vice President; I am very happy to see her again.

Next, I extend my sincere greetings to the members of the Government joining us this morning—my sisters, Ministers Mariatou Kone and Françoise Remarck—and I also greet Mr. Pierre Dimba, Minister of Health, Public Hygiene, and Universal Health Coverage. Mr. Minister, I wish to thank you for supporting this project, the fight against cancer in our country, and I commend the tremendous work you have been doing.

I also acknowledge the French Ambassador, who has come to show his support for this initiative aimed at the health of our fellow citizens.

Finally, I extend my greetings to our sister, Minister Raymonde Goudou Coffie, Chairperson of the Board of the CNPS, and to Mr. Charles Kouassi, Director General of the CNPS.

I would also like to acknowledge the spouses of the Presidents of Institutions, Ministers, and Ambassadors who join us on every occasion. It is a pleasure to see you again this morning, my dear sisters.

My greetings also go to all the administrative and political officials present here, particularly Mr. Lago Moclair, Sub-Prefect of Bingerville, and Mr. Youssouf Doumbia, MP and Mayor of Bingerville whom I thank for their personal involvement in the success of this ceremony.

I also acknowledge the members of my delegation present for this important occasion. Thank you for being here to support this initiative. I extend these greetings to all the dignitaries present, especially the Chairpersons of the Boards of Directors, Directors General, partners, and organizations committed to the fight against cancer.

I would now like to extend a special greeting to Mr. Jocelyn Akele, Chairman of the Board of the European Institute of Oncology (EIO), and to Mr. Alexandre Roquette, its Director General. Gentlemen, it is thanks to your vision and commitment that we are gathered here today. Thank you for bringing this wonderful project to fruition.

My greetings also go to Mr. Sega Sangare and Mr. Hachim Diop respectively the Chairman and Director General of the HME as well as to all the distinguished figures from the medical community. Thank you for your support and for being here.

I also wish to acknowledge the entire EIC staff, oncologists, radiation therapists, technicians, and healthcare professionals who have chosen to dedicate their expertise to the health of our fellow citizens. Every day, you stand on the front lines to fight cancer, and your commitment to preserving life commands our admiration.

I also wish to acknowledge our traditional chiefs and religious leaders, who surround us with their blessings.

My thoughts go out to all our brothers and sisters affected by cancer particularly the "Ambassadeurs de soins," that patient association whose moving stories we heard earlier.

This institute was built to offer you a better chance of remission. It is for you that we are all here today, so that hope may endure.

Finally, I extend my greetings to the people of Bingerville who have turned out in large numbers for this ceremony. And thank you to my sisters from Bingerville for the lovely gift I received.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The event bringing us together today has special significance for me, as it is about the health of our people.

As you know, cancer is a serious disease affecting the entire world including Côte d'Ivoire with 21,300 new cases officially recorded and 14,000 deaths registered each year. Behind these alarming figures we have lives hanging on a diagnosis, families grieving the loss of loved ones to the disease, and children robbed of their innocence.

To effectively combat this disease and save as many lives as possible, it is our responsibility to join forces.

It is against this backdrop that, following the 2018 inauguration of the National Radiotherapy and Oncology Center (CNRAO), we are today inaugurating the European Institute of Oncology. Furthermore, in a few months, a new national medical oncology center will open in Grand-Bassam, further demonstrating the Government's commitment to the fight against cancer.

At this point, I would like to take a moment to extend my sincere congratulations to the Government of Côte d'Ivoire for its efforts in the fight against cancer in our country. Indeed, the public healthcare services on offer complemented by private initiatives such as that of the ECI are improving cancer care for our population, a development I warmly welcome. This represents a tangible response to the challenges of combating cancer in our country.

Furthermore, I am deeply impressed by the approach taken by the ECI's leadership, driven by the conviction that excellent care should be

accessible to all. Consequently, the ECI offers treatments at reduced rates while maintaining the same high quality standards found in the West, an ethical choice that I wish to commend.

The Institute's social commitment is also reflected in its support program for underprivileged patients and its training program for Ivorian medical staff. After all, if providing care today is important, training the doctors of tomorrow is even better and the ECI has fully integrated this into its development plan. I would like to congratulate them on this achievement.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This inauguration is all the more significant as it echoes a cause we have championed for years through the Children of Africa Foundation. As you know, since its inception in 1998, the Foundation has focused its efforts on child protection, specifically in the areas of health, education, and social well-being.

In this context, and specifically regarding the health sector, we inaugurated the Bingerville Mother and Child Hospital (HME) in 2018. Its mission is to provide quality care to mothers and children, particularly for the treatment of serious diseases such as cancer. I am satisfied with the HME's performance; today, it provides free treatment for 90% of the pediatric cancer cases it receives.

Indeed, for several years now, the HME has maintained a strategic partnership with the CNRAO to ensure that the most underprivileged patients have access to oncological care. This partnership reflects our deep conviction that access to treatment should not depend on financial means. It is in this same spirit that the new partnership between the HME and the ECI has been established today, further expanding the availability of free radiotherapy services for the benefit of our children.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

By inaugurating the Bingerville European Cancer Institute today, we are sending a message of hope to those suffering from illness. Access to treatment is now a reality, offering the same high standards found in the West. We possess the capacity to build centers of medical excellence, and we are committed to preserving the lives of men, women, and—above all—our children.

I commend Mr. Akele Jocelyn, Mr. Alexandre Roquette and his partners, and their respective teams for bringing this remarkable project to fruition; it provides invaluable support to the Government's efforts. Thank you for your dedication to saving lives and making medical progress accessible to as many people as possible.

To the patients and their families,

I want you to know that you are not alone; we stand with you wholeheartedly, ready to do whatever it takes to ensure you have access to quality care.

Today in Côte d'Ivoire, cancer can be treated, and recovery is possible. And by joining forces, we will succeed in saving more and more lives.

Thank you.