

**MY REMARKS AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE NEW PEDIATRIC CARDIAC  
SURGERY CENTER AT THE DOMINIQUE OUATTARA MOTHER-AND-CHILD  
HOSPITAL IN BINGERVILLE**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is with great joy that I join you this morning at the Dominique Ouattara Mother-and-Child Hospital in Bingerville for the inauguration of the pediatric cardiac surgery center.

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge the presence of Her Excellency Mrs. Ana Afonso Dias Lourenço, First Lady of the Republic of Angola, as well as that of Her Excellency Mrs. Nathalie Villette-Wadagni, First Lady of the Republic of Benin, who have traveled here to support the Children of Africa Foundation. First Ladies, dear sisters, the affection you have shown me touches me deeply, and I thank you for it.

I would now like to extend my greetings to Mr. Pierre N’Gou Dimba, Minister of Health, Public Hygiene, and Universal Health Coverage, who supports us in all our efforts related to the health of our populations. Thank you, Mr. Minister, for your support.

I would also like to extend my greetings and thanks to the members of the Government, who have been kind enough to stand by our side.

I extend these greetings to the administrative and political officials present here today, and especially to the Sub-Prefect and the Deputy Mayor of Bingerville, whom I thank for their warm welcome.

My affectionate thoughts also go out to my dear sisters, the distinguished members of my delegation, whom I thank for their warm presence.

I would also like to greet and thank all the dignitaries and celebrities who have honored us with their presence this morning to lend their support to this noble cause—the health of our children. Thank you for standing with us. I am sincerely touched by your presence.

Now, I would like to welcome Professor Éric Cheysson, President of La Chaîne de l'Espoir, as well as his wife, Professor Véronique Abadie, who have traveled here to support us. La Chaîne de l'Espoir has been supporting us for many years in all our health-related projects, and I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to them.

I would also like to welcome my dear friends from the healthcare community who are with us this morning:

Professor Thierry Carmoi,

Dr. Jean-Pierre Lablanchy,

Dr. Guy Cassuto,

Dr. Nys,

and Dr. Michel Cohen.

Thank you for supporting the Foundation and, in particular, our initiatives in the field of healthcare.

I would also like to pay tribute to Professor Gérard Babatasi, former head of the cardiac surgery department at the Caen University Hospital, who has joined the team at the Mère-Enfant Hospital in Bingerville. I thank him for his dedication and expertise in establishing and running this pediatric cardiology center.

I would also like to extend my thanks to our partners who have dedicated themselves to creating this important infrastructure. I would like to mention:

- Professor Euloge Kramo Kouadio, Director General of the Abidjan Institute of Cardiology,
- Professor Gabriel Ciss, Director of the Dakar Pediatric Cardiology Center, who welcomed our teams with great kindness as part of their capacity-building efforts.
- As well as all the Directors General, hospital administrators, and physicians in Côte d'Ivoire with whom we collaborate and who are with us today.

I would also like to acknowledge Professor Séga Sangaré, Chair of the hospital's Board of Directors; Mr. Hachim Diop, Executive Director of the HME; and the

members of the Executive Management Team, whom I congratulate for their unwavering commitment to serving the public. I extend these thanks to the entire medical and administrative staff of the HME, who are present this morning at this ceremony.

My greetings now go to our traditional leaders and religious guides, who have come to surround us with their prayers and blessings for this occasion.

Finally, I extend my greetings to all the residents of Bingerville present here today, who have come to take part in this event that brings us together today.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Congenital heart defects are among the leading causes of infant mortality worldwide. In Côte d'Ivoire, one in every 100 births is affected, and 50 to 60 percent of these children will require surgery. When left untreated, these heart defects endanger the lives of our youngest children. They also have a severe impact on their growth, their education, and their chances of thriving like other children.

And yet, congenital heart disease is by no means a death sentence. When properly diagnosed and treated with surgery, it is curable, and 95% of children who undergo surgery reach adulthood.

It is to offer this opportunity to our children, right here in Bingerville, that we are inaugurating the pediatric cardiology center at the Mère-Enfant Hospital this morning. It complements our medical facilities and allows us to take the care of children and newborns with heart conditions to the next level.

This center is equipped with operating rooms designed for open-heart surgery on children and newborns, 20 beds for neonatal care and neonatal intensive care, 22 beds for pediatric surgery, and a full suite of cardiological diagnostic tools.

Thanks to this state-of-the-art equipment and the expertise of our physicians, we will be able to make early diagnoses, monitor each child's progress, and, when necessary, perform open-heart surgery on very young patients. This is a major breakthrough that will save many children's lives in Côte d'Ivoire.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Dear Parents,**

By making this facility available to families in Côte d'Ivoire, it is my hope that no child will ever again be denied cardiac care.

We want to give all our children a chance to live and build their future. And we also want to give families back the joy of watching their children grow up healthy.

Today, a child born with a heart defect can be diagnosed, operated on, and monitored right here in Bingerville. I am deeply happy for our children and their parents.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to note that the pediatric cardiology center we are inaugurating today is the result of the dedication of many people.

Therefore, I would like to pay tribute to all those who have helped make this a reality.

I am thinking in particular of our generous donors, who have continued to place their trust in us over the years. Dear donors, your support has never wavered, and I am infinitely grateful to you.

I am also thinking of the entire medical staff: the doctors, nurses, and nursing assistants; as well as the team at the House of Life and all those who dedicate themselves every day to providing care and comfort to sick children and their families.

On behalf of our dear children, I express my deepest gratitude to each and every one of you.

Thank you to each and every one of you for your commitment to working alongside us to promote the health and well-being of our children.