

**MY SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF MERCK
AFRICA LUMINARY COLLOQUIUM**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It's a pleasure to take part in the opening ceremony of the symposium MERCK AFRICA LUMINARY in Abidjan, in your company. I would first like to greet the distinguished presence of Brigitte TOUADERA, First Lady of Cenral African Republic, whom I am happy to meet again but for her first visit to Côte d'Ivoire. Thank you Dear sister for your welcome presence.

My greetings also extend to Professor Frank STANGENBERG-HAVERKAMP, Chairman of the Merck Board, and of the Council of Merck Family and to all the Board of Directors of Merck, who made the trip to Abidjan to conduct the reflection, regarding the health of our populations.

I would also like to welcome the distinguished personalities present here, including the Ministers from brother countries whose mobilization today highlights their commitment to the socio-economic development of African continent.

Finally, I greet all the eminent medical professionals gathered for this conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before any further statement, I would like to thank the leaders of Merck, to have gathered in Abidjan more than 350 health professionals, policy makers and researchers from 25 countries in Anglophone and French speaking Africa. Three years after its implementation, the MERCK AFRICA LUMINARY project is presented for the first time in a French speaking country. This project's main objective is to contribute to social and economic development in Africa in two ways: - First, by strengthening the capacity of health workers and hospitals, - And secondly, by promoting high quality, and innovative health care. This project should lead to improve quality and access to health care services, especially regarding the treatment of diabetes, hypertension, cancer and infertility. I remain convinced that this initiative will help improve the health care capacity of our hospitals, and facilitate people's access to existing healthcare solutions to come.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As part of this overall initiative, the specific campaign against infertility called Merck MORE THAN A MOTHER has particularly aroused my

interest. This component on the care of infertile women on the continent, is in line with my personal commitment to the welfare of women and child protection in my country. I

Indeed, the empowerment of women is a priority issue of my social action. That is why I initiated in December 2012, the establishment of a micro-credit Support Fund for the Women of Côte d'Ivoire, which today enables more than 110 000 women to undertake income-generating activities. In terms of health care for mothers and expectant mothers, Children Of Africa Foundation has undertaken the construction of a hospital specially dedicated to the mother and the child, which is currently being completed. In this regard, I would like to renew my gratitude to Merck Foundation, which has decided to contribute to the implementation of this hospital, in the framework of a partnership with Children Of Africa.

As First Lady, but as a woman also, I can only fully support the MERCK MORE THAN A MOTHER campaign, since it implies giving back hope to many women. In fact, according to statistics, 85% of cases of infertility in Africa are due to untreated infectious diseases, genital mutilation, abortions and risks delivery at risk. Prevention is therefore an essential step to effectively fight against infertility in our continent.

Moreover, women who cannot have children, are too often stigmatized. This state of fact must be fought for a deep change of mentality. At our level, we must encourage dialogue and exchange on this sensitive subject. We must also admit that infertility is a shared responsibility in the couple. To achieve this, access to information, education and health are essential prerequisites. It is therefore important to unite our energies, to achieve real change.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I remain convinced that the two days of discussions to share with your peers, will give you avenues for improving the health of our populations, and women's empowerment. I reiterate my thanks to the Merck's leaders, for their different initiatives to benefit the health of our people, and for this awareness-raising and prevention campaign on infertility.

I officially declare open this third MERCK AFRICA LUMINARY colloquium.

Thank you.