**SPEECH OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR ON LABOUR DAY CELEBRATION 1st May 2024**

Dear DVCs, Deans, Directors, HoDs, Faculty, Administrative staff and Support staff,

Dear colleagues,

Today is our pleasure to celebrate together the Labour Day! We are celebrating the growth and the achievements of INES-Ruhengeri, and our own achievements within INES-Ruhengeri. Happy Labour Day to everyone.

Dear Colleagues,

The Joy we have been expressing from this morning until now, the remarks and notes from different persons, the lunch we took together, and the importance given to the organization of this event, may reflect the image of INES-Ruhengeri, and its conception of the Labour Day. This is the day to honour the workers, the backbone of INES-Ruhengeri’ achievements. This is the day the employer is celebrating the efforts of his employees. Indeed, “***Without labor nothing prospers***” as the Greek writer Sophocles, said. Let us celebrate this, because without us, INES-Ruhengeri cannot prosper. In the Gospel according to Saint John, Jesus says, “*The truth will make you free*”. The German philologist Lorenz Diefenbach changed “*Wahrheit macht frei”* into *“Arbeit macht frei*”, i.e. “*Work sets you free*” or “*Work liberates*”. Le français Pierre Doris n’as pas nié ça, mais il trouve cela insuffisant. Il affirme, « *Le travail anoblit l’homme, mais le rend esclave »*. We have chosen to become *noble slaves* even if this sounds contradictory. For this reason, I want to thank you, today, as one amongst you, for a good number of reasons. I will mention a few of them:

* I thank you for having a common and shared vision: we have embraced the education of quality, we have accepted to put at the center of our action the absolute good of our students. Please continue to consider every INES-Ruhengeri’ student like your own son and/or daughter. Our young people are looking to us for guidance to realize their dreams. We are their own parents here at INES-Ruhengeri. Teach, not cheat! Instruct, educate, coach, and mentor.
* I want to thank you for your enthusiasm at work. You love your work and your job gives a sense of honor to you and to your families. Yours is a vocation, it is not a job! Please, enjoy what you do. Enjoy doing it! Do it the way it is supposed to be done. Heaven will reward you for that.
* I want to thank you for the good service and the care you give to your clients. We have all understood that, today, the world has grown competitive; robots are replacing humans in almost all manual labour, machines are becoming intelligent. The education of quality is vital if we want our Africa and especially Rwanda to have a bright future. The good you have to do, do it now. Justice delayed is justice denied.
* I want to thank you for your professionalism. INES-Ruhengeri is an international Institution. We thank INES-Ruhengeri Owners who accepted to believe in us, and entrust to our care this magnificent institution. Please, let us show to them that we deserve their trust; especially that we are still challenged by the orientation of INES-Ruhengeri as *a University of Applied Sciences*.
* I want to thank our international staff for choosing INES-Ruhengeri for their current service. You are good Pan Africanists; you are honoring our continent and the world.
* I want to thank you for your teamwork. What unites us is more important than what separates us. Please continue to conjugate efforts for the success of INES-Ruhengeri’ team. To work as a team does not mean that, we all have to sing the same song. At university, the key concept is “intellectual freedom” for creativity and innovation. Without intellectual freedom, the university is dead. Be bold and make it happen.
* I want to thank you because you are very smart. Please maintain a good working environment where everyone feels at home and enjoys his/her work. This is possible if, and only if, we follow our different policies and regulations. Equity and respect build brotherhood!
* I want to thank you for your leadership qualities: ownership, good communication, empathy, conflict management, integrity, trust, ethic of service like self-direction. Please, do produce more good leaders.
* I want to thank you for your patience. I know that to be motivated you need motivations. A good working environment is the best motivation ever! Self-sacrifice is also rewarding.

In the same line, today it is also the time to remember that not only we have to work, to perform and to sustain our achievements, but also we have to strategically act within the dynamic context of higher education. It is manifest that the world of today needs a rapid shift in mindset in order to respond to its complexity and the necessary competitiveness it involves. This will depend on the way we are ready to prepare our young people.

We, as employees of university, we are expected to provide more than the work. Indeed, we are creating values, we are shaping the creators of the future, we are challenging, renewing and upgrading the current work force. We are inspiring and opening the minds of the heads of the future. The most important responsibility that we have towards our students is to make them responsible: responsible for their life, responsible for their future, responsible for the public interest, responsible for their society.

This is a very noble, and most delicate and difficulty job but “***the miracle is not that we do this work, but that we are happy to do it***”. (Mother Teresa of Calcutta)

At national level, this year, the *Employment Promotion Month* and Labour Day Celebration will focus on the theme “**30 years: Fostering Youth-Led Employment**”. This theme embeds the national achievements and re-affirmation of the national commitments for the future of work. INES-Ruhengeri is part of this: we have recorded 20 years in contribution of preparing the work force, creating jobs and positively impacting communities. The journey continues, and we have to achieve more, especially by confirming the status and the traditional mission of the university. Ours is a University of Applied Sciences. We are both theoretical and practical, *Mens et Manus,* Mind and hand. We want our students to graduate with enough hands-on experience. Where are we in this decisive orientation?

In our academic context, I wish to suggest to all us a few skills that are vital today, knowing that the first skill we need most is wisdom:

* Artificial intelligence skills,
* Emotional intelligence skills,
* Tech skills,
* Social media marketing skills,
* Digital proficiencies or client engagement and communication,
* Cybersecurity skills,
* Customer service skills, among others.

To meet employer expectations for job-ready skills, instructional methods have been proposed. The idea is about how to achieve student outcomes with learning pathways and leveraging industry partnerships.

Here are some key insights:

* **Take a Skills-First Approach to Industry Alignment:** Maximize student workplace readiness by integrating industry-relevant micro-credentials and certifications and hands-on guided projects.
* **Align Curriculum and Engage Faculty:** Conduct a skills analysis and align curriculum with current job market; involve faculty/teaching staff in these processes to keep them current and effective in teaching.
* **Be Student-Centric:** Include Professional Certificates within tuition, providing immediate value to students and educational pathways that support retention and academic persistence.
* **Strengthen Industry Collaboration:** Form partnerships with industry leaders for authentic learning experiences and co-branded marketing opportunities.
* **Leverage Prior Learning:** Recognize existing student knowledge, through credit for prior learning or a substitution, so students can maximize future learning efforts.
* **Do Coaching, and coaching, and coaching:** both students and staff need some kind of coaching. Remember that repetition is the mother of education and learning.

To conclude, allow me to quote the French novelist Émile Édouard Charles Antoine ZOLA,“*The artist is nothing without the gift, but the gift is nothing without work*”.

I wish you a job that gives you joy and happiness while you accomplish it, and sustains the good living of your family. Your job is supposed to provide to you at least two things: *first, to give you happiness; second, to assure to your family and your beloved ones a good and decent living*.

Let us deliver in an appropriate way, let us give to our students the best gift we can.

Once again, happy Labour Day to everyone.

May God bless you!