

The spoken text shall prevail

Speech of HRH the Grand Duchess The Hague November 28, 2018

Your Majesty,

Dear Dr Mukwege,

Ladies and Gentlemen

I must admit that it is a great emotion to be with you this evening. There are so many wonderful women here! I have met some of you for the first time in Geneva last year at the 1st Survivors' reunion and I am so glad to see you again.

It was very moving for me to hear your stories and shed tears with you. You all told me how important recognition of your suffering is in the process of rebuilding your lives!

The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Dr Mukwege and Nadia Murad both symbols and heroes of the fight against sexual violence in conflicts shines a light on the tragedy faced by hundreds of thousands of women.

For a long time, few people have paid attention to one of the worst crimes of current conflicts: Rape as a weapon!

Rape is increasingly being used to terrorize and subjugate civilians. It is often part of a larger strategy to seize natural resources or take control of a territory.

Because I cannot bear the terrible suffering of those, I dare call my sisters I consider their defense a moral obligation and have made this cause mine.

I became determined to do something after I met Doctor Mukwege at a conference in Luxembourg in 2016.

I asked him how I could help the victims. He replied that he had just created a group of survivors and he asked me to give them a platform.

We have both experienced the painful situation of talking to people of the terrible suffering so many women go through, and seeing that they do not really want to acknowledge the problematic, looking at the floor rather than into our eyes.

That is why I decided to organize an international conference that will put the survivors in the spotlight to amplify their voices.

Because indignation is no longer enough! We must pass from emotion to action!

It is an honour and a joy that Doctor Mukwege and his Foundation are strategic partners of my conference; together with the NGO We are not Weapons of War. I am also very fortunate and proud that the Luxembourg government supports this initiative and that the Women's Forum for the Economy and Society will help me with the organization.

The survivors will be at the heart of the conference we have entitled "Stand Speak Rise Up!" which will take place on the 26th and 27th of March 2019 in Luxembourg.

To rise up, these brave and exceptionally strong women need our solidarity to amplify their voices, share their need for recognition, reparation and justice and spread their message of peace.

I am convinced that by putting the survivors at the center of attention, we can help them transform themselves from victims to powerful agents of change.

That is why I am at their side and that is one of the great objectives of this conference.

Dear Survivors: This will be YOUR conference!

Your Majesty,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Conflict plays a major role in increasing poverty. If we do nothing now, by 2030, more than half of the poor will live in a country with high levels of insecurity.

It is not only your sense of solidarity that I am appealing to today, but it is also our collective responsibility.

Just as our passivity has consequences on the lives of millions of human beings in the world, our involvement will have a considerable impact.

It is never too late to make a difference!

Thank you very much.