

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr President.

I am deeply honored to receive this prestigious award, although I know I am receiving it for doing things that I, and my staff, quite simply should not have to do.

In the last 15 years, we have received tens of thousands of women at the Panzi Hospital in Eastern Congo who are survivors of sexual violence, or have severe gynecological conditions. We repair and restore these women to the best of our abilities.

The women who come to us, damaged by rape or with complications from delivering their babies at home in their villages or in the bush, should first get primary health care in their communities. We are one of the richest countries when it comes to natural resources but our population is one of the world's poorest. These women should have access to basic and professional health care close to where they live.

But they don't -- yet.

However, with national and international political will and responsibility, we hope to see further changes, and a more secure Democratic Republic of Congo.

Like all of us, Congolese women deserve to live in peace and security. None of them should end up at our hospital because of the indifference of policymakers and others with the tools and power to make a difference.

Sexual violence is strategic warfare, aimed at destroying the very fabric of the Congolese family and society. As a doctor, it is frustrating to treat consequences of indifference, and see that nothing is being done to remove the root causes of the problem. It is a complex situation but I think you know it is not impossible to find a solution.

But it's a solution we must all be part of. I am convinced that what we do and what we don't do matters. You who are here tonight have the competence, resources, knowledge, and power to help solve the problems we face in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This can be anything from helping to get sufficient equipment for the work of Panzi Hospital, to lobbying for policy change, both nationally and internationally.

So let us seek solutions together and strive to do the right thing.

Women of Congo do not need pity, they need action. And I hope that all of you here tonight will be part of making that action a reality.

Thank you!