

His Majesty King Willem-Alexander  
Her Majesty Queen Maxima,  
Her Majesty Princess Beatrix,  
King's Commissioner for the Province of Zeeland,  
Members of the Roosevelt Foundation,  
Distinguished guests,

It is my pleasure to be with you today in the historic Abbey of Middelburg.

Members of the Roosevelt Foundation,

I accept the Freedom from Want award today on behalf of all victims of rape around the world. By highlighting the work carried out at Panzi Hospital, you have chosen to hear the cries and suffering of women victims of sexual violence. You are choosing to recognize the fierce determination of survivors who become advocates for social change and justice in their communities. They are often at the **forefront in the fight against poverty**.

I greatly admire you, Ms. Linor Abargil for your dedication, and wish to express my most sincere gratitude for your tireless advocacy in encouraging other survivors of rape to speak out. Like many girls and women, you have transformed your pain into power, and you inspire all of us.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Women in Africa are carrying the family and the economy on their shoulders. **If even a single woman** is physically harmed and destroyed psychologically, the cycle of violence and poverty is perpetuated.

We cannot continue to neglect the rights of more than half the world's population. We know that when women are healthy and educated, families, communities, and society as a whole flourishes.

It is time to act and put words into action. It is time to fill the gap between the law and its implementation. It is time to engage men and boys, with women and girls, in the struggle to end patriarchal discrimination and gender based abuses. **It is time** to draw a **red line against rape** as a weapon of war, as a weapon of oppression. It is time to unite and act together for our common humanity, towards freedom from want globally.

Finally, please allow me to share with you a message from my patients: they express the need for peace and democracy in the heart of Africa! Together, we must create an environment in which the social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights of women and girls can be fully enjoyed, and where they will fully be able to contribute to the betterment of our world, free from want and free from fear.

I trust we will prevail!

Thank you.

Doctor Mukwege, MD, PhD

Middelburg, April 21, 2016