

Kagame calls on business leaders to change mindset



President Paul Kagame with Monique Nsanzabaganwa, Minister of Trade and Industry and Robert Bayigamba, president of the Private Sector Federation and some of the participants at the 3rd Presidential Business Round Table. (Photo Urugwiro Village)

BY BERNA NAMATA

URUGWIRO VILLAGE - President Paul Kagame has called upon the Rwandan business community and government officials to have a change in mindset especially in service delivery to enable the country sustain rapid economic development and achieve greater prosperity.

The President was meeting members of the Rwandan business community on Friday during the third Annual Business Roundtable attended by private sector business leaders from different parts of the country.

“The issue of customer service is a serious one - for government and private sector and unless we overcome it, we are wasting a lot of time and therefore we will not achieve the kind of development we want to achieve,” Kagame said.

“There have been many discussions before but we need to get down to serious business,” the President emphasized while urging the private sector to be more effective and efficient in their businesses.

The President who spoke after a presentation on “Achieving Excellence through Customer Service” by guest speaker John Tschohl, a renowned American Customer Care guru, expressed concern over the continuous poor customer services in the country.

He noted that many Rwandans have studied abroad and many more tour developed countries to borrow lessons but applying these lessons in Rwanda remains a problem.

“I only wonder how many times our business people and government officials need to hear the message of embracing customer care services. I really wonder whether they heard it today from John Tschohl, and were listening because it is high time we listened and heard these voices telling us what we are expected to do,” Kagame said.

The President also observed that in a global perspective, it is imperative for the country to develop unique features that will attract investment.

“For Rwanda to develop and achieve the prosperity that we so badly need and wish to

have- there are things you will not avoid doing – there are no short cuts.”

Referring to a constantly used phrase that Rwanda wants to be the Singapore or Switzerland of Africa, Kagame said that Rwanda wants to be Rwanda of Africa.

“People have asked about Rwanda trying to be the Singapore of Africa or Switzerland of Africa, my answer is, No! Rwanda wants to be Rwanda of Africa – what it means though is that Rwanda has to be the best it can be,” he said.

He emphasized that the country has to work towards changing its image from being referred to as Rwanda of “poor people, poverty stricken nation, disease or bad customer service.”

The chairman Private Sector Federation, Robert Bayigamba hailed government’s efforts in establishing an enabling environment that has fuelled business growth citing Rwanda’s recognition as top reformer in the World Bank 2010 Doing Business Report.

“This continues to help lower the perceived market risk hence attracting FDI,” Bayigamba said.

The PSF chief said that Rwanda’s recent admission into the Commonwealth and restoration of relations with France provides platforms for business, trade and increased market opportunities.

Through their umbrella organization, the private sector requested government to facilitate trade with a focus reducing transport costs, Small and Medium Enterprise development and skills development.

President Kagame also accepted a request from the business community to have two meetings every year. He also pledged to expeditiously respond to issues raised during the meeting.

The third business round table was attended by approximately 220 business leaders around the country.