**Talking Points for Hon. Minister of Infrastructure for the 8th IPAR Annual Research Conference on “Urbanization, Urban Planning and Urban Governance”– June 19, 2019.**

* Executive Director IPAR-Rwanda;
* Distinguished ladies and gentlemen;

Good Morning.

1. It is my great honour to be here for this conference on urbanization, urban planning and Urban governance.
2. This conference has come at the right time when Rwanda has prioritized urbanization as a key pillar to economic growth. Thanks to IPAR for organizing this important event.
3. According to the UN report on Urbanization 2018, 55% of today’s world population lives in urban areas, a proportion that is expected to increase to more than 70% by 2050.
4. The same report also shows that; the gradual shift in residence of the human population from rural to urban areas could add another 2.5 billion people to urban areas by 2050, with close to 90% of this increase taking place in Asia and Africa mostly sub Saharan Africa. Despite this trend, Africa remains mostly rural, with 43% of its population living in urban areas.
5. This clearly shows that there is a need to plan ahead of time in terms of availability of infrastructure like roads, access to water and sanitation, electricity, housing as well as improved mobility.
6. According to the vision 2020 and the blue print of vision 2050, the government of Rwanda targets to reach a 35% proportion of urban population by 2024 from currently 18.4%.
7. In line with the New Vision 2050, a study was conducted by the Government of Rwanda in partnership with the World Bank which identified 6 future drivers of growth among which urbanization is one of the top priority.
8. In view of this, the Government of Rwanda has taken different initiatives including development of Secondary cities and satellite cities to reduce pressure on Kigali and become centers of economic growth.
9. The secondary cities were identified and chosen based on their respective strategic location, economic performance trends, uniqueness and potential to become regional economic hubs and unlock transformative economic opportunities. These include Rubavu, Rusizi, Musanze, Nyagatare, Huye and Muhanga.
10. These cities and other potential emerging market towns are expected to play a crucial central role in supporting Rwanda’s strategic goals to rapidly increase urbanization to accommodate future urban population growth.
11. On this note, the ongoing Rwanda Urban Development Program (RUDP) that was put in place in partnership with World Bank is playing a significant role in our journey to achieve the envisaged urbanization of Kigali and the 6 secondary cities.
12. The development of these Cities is also supported by policy and program on Affordable housing where the Government has established a Fund for the owners to access cheap money.
13. Another important initiative that the Government has taken is the development of National Land Use masterplan, sectoral masterplans as well as Kigali and City Masterplans expected to be completed next year.

1. For urbanization to develop and be sustainable there is a need for strong partnership with private sector and other key players including UN-Habitat, Shelter Afrique among others.
2. Finally, I urge the Civil Society, Researchers and Academia here present to prioritize research and innovation in new technologies for affordable housing development and new models for informal settlement upgrading.
3. With these few remarks, I wish to officially open this conference.
4. I thank you