

REPUBLIC OF RWANDA



Opening Remarks by

Olivier Jean Patrick NDUHUNGIREHE
Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands

In the conference entitled
*“Role of the International Criminal Justice in
Upholding Accountability for the Crime of Genocide”*

The Hague, Wednesday 22nd May 2024

- **Monsieur François ALABRUNE**, Ambassador of France to the Netherlands and dear friend;
- **Judge Graciela GATTI SANTANA**, President of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT);
- **M. Guillaume LEFÈVRE-PONTALIS**, Deputy antiterrorist Prosecutor of the Republic in France;
- **Mr. Aimable HAVUGIYAREMYE**, Prosecutor General of the Republic of Rwanda;
- **Mr. Mame MANDIAYE NIANG**, Deputy Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC);
- **Professor Carsten STAHN** of the University of Leiden;
- **Ms. Emiliya VIKTOROVA**, Senior Legal Officer in the Mechanism IRMCT;
- Excellencies Ambassadors, members of the diplomatic corps;
- Dear compatriots, distinguished participants;

Good afternoon!

1. I thank you all for attending this conference under the theme: “*Role of the International Criminal Justice in Upholding Accountability for the Crime of Genocide*”. This conference was organized by the Embassy of Rwanda, together with the Embassy of France, in collaboration with the Embassy of France in The Hague, as one of the events of “*Kwibuka30*”, which is the 30th commemoration of the 1994 genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi in Rwanda. I thank my colleague and friend Ambassador François Alabrune of France, who is not only a good diplomat but also a great legal mind specialized in international law, for accepting to propose this reflection together.
2. I would start by saying that we are at the right place at the right moment to discuss this important topic of “*international criminal justice*” and “*accountability for the crime of genocide*”. We are indeed in this beautiful and historical building, the *Peace Palace*, located in the Hague, the city of international peace and justice, and we are in the hundred days of remembrance of the terrible tragedy that befell Rwanda in 1994.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

3. The genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda was devastating. In 1994, more than a million people were killed in just three months from a population of around 7.5 million. The economy was destroyed, infrastructures were in shambles and more than two million people fled the country. At the end of the genocide in July 1994, one of the most critical challenges for the new government was justice and prosecution of the suspects of this crime.
4. On this issue, many questions then arose: How could the Rwandan government envisage accountability in that terrible context of a massive number of victims and a massive number of perpetrators? How could we give justice to the victims when most judges, prosecutors and lawyers were either killed or had fled the country? How could any suspect stand trial when courtrooms and other judicial facilities were damaged or destroyed? And how could we ensure an effective collaboration between Rwanda, on one side, and foreign countries and the international judicial system, on another, as many masterminds of the genocide and many leaders of the genocidal regime had fled the country?
5. Those were few daunting questions that had to be addressed. Following the genocide, there were three tracks that were followed to ensure accountability: the Rwandan national jurisdictions (including traditional jurisdictions *Gacaca*), foreign tribunals (to try genocide fugitives) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). Thirty years after its establishment, we can now take stock on the successes, challenges and few failures of the ICTR, which was later on replaced by the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (MICT), to reflect on and analyse the role that the international criminal justice can play in prosecuting suspects of genocide.
6. I truly hope, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, that our distinguished panellists, backed by their knowledge and vast experience, will guide us through this complex and sensitive topic, which is legal, yes, but with political and diplomatic ramifications. I hope that the debate will be as informative and interactive as possible, and could enable the diplomatic, academic and legal communities in The Hague to draw lessons from the 1994 genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi, and reflect on the best way to ensure accountability and to prosecute, in an effective manner, suspects of genocide.
7. I wish you a fruitful debate.