

REPUBLIC OF RWANDA



Statement by

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On the occasion of the 27th commemoration of the
Genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi in Rwanda (Kwibuka27)

The Hague, 7th April 2021

Mr Paul Huijts, Secretary General in the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Judge Carmel Agius, President of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT);
Mrs Christine Safari, President of IBUKA-Netherlands;
Mrs Naila Clarisse, survivor of the 1994 genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi;
Excellencies Ambassadors, Heads of Mission and members of the diplomatic corps;
Dear compatriots and friends of Rwanda; ladies and gentlemen;

Good afternoon! I wish to start by expressing my gratitude to you all for being with us today for the 27th commemoration of the 1994 genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi. This is the second year that we organize this event online, as the Netherlands and the whole world are still battling the COVID-19 pandemic. However, with the ongoing vaccination campaign and the implementation of preventive measures, we hope that this Kwibuka27 will be the last that we would hold by afar, without being physically together.

First and foremost, I would like to give solace to you, genocide survivors, especially in this difficult period in which the Rwandan community cannot comfort you as per our tradition. Twenty seven years have passed, but the wounds are still fresh and the memories are still vivid. But I can promise you that the Government of Rwanda will continue to stand by your side and support you in the long journey towards healing. Indeed, since this fateful year of 1994, you have shown incredible resilience and strength; strength to rebuild yourselves, physically and morally, and strength to rebuild your country.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen;

We are here once again gathered to remember, unite and renew, as per the theme of our commemoration.

We remember a million children, women and men massacred during a hundred days of horror, for the only crime of being born as per God's wish. We remember and honour women and girls who were sexually abused and who, for those who survived, were left with trauma and incurable diseases. And we remember the righteous among the Rwandan nation who chose to oppose evil and protect lives at the expense of their own.

We unite as Rwandans, a people that share a single culture, a single language and the same beliefs to defy the artificial divide caused by colonialists and entertained by ethnic regimes. We unite to turn a dark page of our history, to restore the dignity of our people, to promote reconciliation and our "Rwandaness", in order to shape a brighter future for present and future generations.

We renew as an ancient country that chose not only to recover and rebuild, but also to be resilient and self-reliant, striving for socio-economic transformation, for the promotion of the well-being of the population and for the protection of our planet. And we renew our commitment to share

with the rest of the world our experience in peace-building and to learn from others', with a view to fostering solidarity among the nations and building a better world.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen;

Genocide is the most serious crime on earth. Therefore, accountability for those who planned, organized and executed this horrible offence to humanity is a fundamental human right for the victims and a necessary step towards healing and reconciliation. In this regard, significant achievements were recorded by the Rwandan judiciary over the past 27 years, including the adjudication of almost two million cases by the "Gacaca" jurisdictions between June 2002 and June 2010.

As for the fugitives abroad, the Government of Rwanda has, since 2007, issued indictments and international arrest warrants for nine hundred and eleven (911) individuals living in thirty-three (33) countries worldwide. Rwanda appreciates the critical role played by friendly and principled countries, which prosecuted and/or extradited genocide fugitives living on their soil.

We are particularly grateful to the Kingdom of the Netherlands for the decisive actions it took in this regard. Not only did our host country support our justice sector in the wake of the genocide, but it also investigated, arrested, prosecuted, convicted and extradited a number of genocide fugitives. The Government of Rwanda remains actively engaged with Dutch authorities to ensure that the remaining genocide suspects, who are still roaming the streets of Dutch cities and towns, are also brought to book.

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) was also able to hold a number of genocide masterminds to account. The ICTR, as well as its successor - the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT) -, will leave a substantive body of jurisprudence, including the qualification of crimes committed in Rwanda as "genocide against the Tutsi ethnic group", as well as the fact that rape and sexual violence also constitute genocide in the same way as any other act, as long as they were committed with intent to destroy a particular group targeted as such.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen;

Last year on 20th April 2020, the United Nations General Assembly reaffirmed the date of 7th April as the "International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda". The Assembly condemned without reservation any denial of that genocide and urged member States to develop educational programs that will inculcate in future generations the lessons of that genocide in order to help preventing future genocides.

Regarding this fight against genocide denial, Professor Gregory Stanton, a renowned researcher in genocide studies and prevention, who wrote a book on the ten (10) stages of genocide, listed denial as part of the crime of genocide itself, as the tenth and ultimate stage of genocide. Deniers

are adding insult to the injury of genocide. They are “killing the death”, as the Dutch professor Roland Moerland rightly put it in his book. Deniers’ aim is to blame and torment the victims while absolving the perpetrators. Genocide denial was initially spread by genocide fugitives across the globe, through their families and communities, but they later on received support from scholars, regional experts, lawyers and journalists, even here in the Netherlands.

In this respect, we thank the Dutch government for taking its part in the global efforts against genocide denial. We believe that commemorations and public awareness campaigns are preventive measures of prime importance against this scourge. However, this is far from enough. This is why our Embassy, together with IBUKA-Netherlands, is ready to work with the Dutch government and municipalities to find a place in this country for a memorial of the genocide against the Tutsi and to ensure that this major event in the history of humanity is adequately taught in Dutch schools and other forums. Furthermore, as preventive measures are never enough to avoid the commission of a crime, we hope that the host government will consider adopting legislation against denial of the genocide against the Tutsi, on the model of laws already enacted in France and Belgium.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen;

H.E. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, once stated: “The security of peoples who have once been targeted for extermination can never be exclusively physical. Until all ideologies which justify killing as a patriotic duty are defeated, our world is not truly safe”. In this regard, I recall that “Never Again” was the world’s commitment after the Holocaust. This commitment was renewed after the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. It is our view that “Never Again” should not be just a sincere sentiment or a convenient slogan but should be translated into a fortress against the ever present threat of extermination.

In the aftermath of the genocide, Rwanda became committed to peacekeeping and to protection of civilians around the world, and is now ranked third UN troops and police contributing country globally. We have also endorsed the UN principle of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), and as a matter of facts, Rwanda co-chaired with the Netherlands for many years the Group of Friends of the R2P in New York. Similarly, our country was a promoter of the Kigali Principles for the Protection of Civilians, adopted in our capital city – Kigali - in May 2015. Those principles are made of commitments by the United Nations and by troops and police contributing countries to protect civilians more effectively.

With the more recent Action for Peacekeeping initiative (A4P), Rwanda believes that the United Nations is now fully equipped with a comprehensive framework to prevent the world from other mass atrocities. And we hope that collectively, despite recent failures in conflict theatres, all UN member States will eventually implement all those UN principles in good faith. Here, we should always remember the wise and optimistic words of a 15-year old girl and Holocaust victim deported from Amsterdam, Ann Frank, who wrote in her diary: “I keep my ideals, because in spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart”.

In closing, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, and to honour the victims of 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, let me once again invite you to remember, unite and renew, by speaking and acting against hate, against racism, against antisemitism, against bigotry, against discrimination, against mass atrocities, and against the crime of crimes - Genocide.

I thank you for your kind attention.