

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour to speak to you today.

Thirty years have passed since the genocide against the Tutsi erupted.

Thirty years since families, villages and communities were ripped apart.

Thirty years since over one million people lost their lives.

The genocide destroyed the lives of countless Rwandans, including moderate Hutu and others who opposed the killings.

Today, we honour those who lost their lives, and those who survived but whose lives were changed forever.

I would also like to pay tribute to the people of Rwanda for what they've achieved against all odds over the past three decades. Today Rwanda stands as a beacon of hope in a troubled world. Despite the devastation, despite the dangers, Rwanda chose to rebuild the country and unite its people. An immense challenge for a society that had lost so many people, where homes and villages had been destroyed and where survivors would encounter perpetrators on a daily basis. Many survivors remained in Rwanda, while others – like many of you – decided to settle elsewhere. Together, the people of Rwanda managed to rebuild their society. And in doing so, chose to tackle the deep divisions in the country.

Rwanda's new society was built on the conviction that the only way to make life bearable again was to start living together again. It was founded on truth, justice and reconciliation, not on revenge.

Through Gacaca courts and through the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. And today through domestic courts in Rwanda as well as in several other countries, including the Netherlands.

This path of peace allowed victims and perpetrators to live together again, however painful this must have been, and still is. This choice demonstrated the immense strength and courage of the entire Rwandan population and continues to do so. I have deep respect for these collective efforts to heal wounds and bridge divisions.

Many of you lost relatives and friends or grew up in broken families. You still have to live with the shadow of what happened thirty years ago. The wounds of the genocide may never fully heal.

Still, Rwanda and its people have shown immense resilience. Today, thirty years on, a new generation of Rwandans has emerged, having grown up in peace and security.

Initiatives like this commemoration encourage people to talk about what happened.

It helps them understand the complex social impact of the genocide. And most of all: it helps them to never forget. To never forget the atrocities of the genocide, never forget what caused it and never forget those who were so brutally killed. We must keep commemorating what happened, to help future generations avoid the mistakes of the past.

We need to commemorate it to keep the memory alive not only for the new generation of Rwandans, but for the entire international community, which failed to intervene and prevent the atrocities.

Commemoration also serves as a reminder for the international community to keep encouraging Rwanda on its path to peace and justice for all.

In closing, let us pledge to never forget the genocide that took place in Rwanda. Let us express our deepest sympathy and solidarity with the victims and their families. And let us reaffirm our commitment to work together in the fight against impunity. Only then can we truly honour the memory of those who were lost.

Thank you.