

REPUBLIC OF RWANDA



Statement by

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Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands

On the occasion of the celebration of the 28th
Liberation Day of the Republic of Rwanda

The Hague, 4th July 2022

Mrs Martine Van Hoogstraten, Acting Head of the Department for Sub-Saharan Africa in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

Excellencies Ambassadors, Heads of Mission and international organizations, members of the diplomatic corps;

Dear compatriots and friends of Rwanda; ladies and gentlemen;

Good afternoon! Let me start by thanking you all for finding time to be with us today to celebrate the 28th anniversary of Rwanda's Liberation Day. Indeed, the date of 4th July 1994 has a particular resonance in the hearts and minds of Rwandans, as it is the day on which forces of the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) stopped the genocide against the Tutsi by overthrowing the regime that was committing it over the previous hundred days. This year, we also take the opportunity to mark the 60th anniversary of the Independence of Rwanda, which was recovered in 1962 in a very difficult context of crimes against humanity committed against a part of the Rwandan population.

This celebration in the Netherlands, which was not organized for the past three (3) years because of COVID-19 restrictions, comes at an important moment for the diplomatic community in The Hague; not only because there is sunshine and that this is the beginning of the summer (which should never be taken for granted in the Netherlands), but also because the diplomatic activity is again more lively in The Hague with many opportunities to connect and network.

As Ambassador of Rwanda in The Hague, I am also accredited to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as well as to international organisations and jurisdictions based in The Hague. I value the friendship and growing cooperation between Rwanda and the three Baltic countries, mainly in the areas of digital transformation, fintech and industry, and I also acknowledge the tremendous contribution of institutions based in The Hague to promote accountability for the most serious crimes, including genocide, and to maintain international peace and security.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen;

I thank Mrs Martine Van Hoogstraten, representative of the Dutch Government, for her presence today and for her statement. Rwanda and the Netherlands have been enjoying a long-lasting relationship, dating to the time when Rwanda was also a kingdom. Indeed, the first contact between the two countries goes as back as 1957 and took place around a glass of beer. That year, the Heineken Group established in Rwanda our national

brewery, which became the main producer of beer and soft drinks in our country. So, perhaps the fact that Rwandans are among the biggest consumers of beer in Africa could be put to the credit (some would say *to the debit*) of the Kingdom of the Netherlands!

Following the Liberation of 4th July 1994, the Netherlands became a reliable partner in our recovery and socio-economic transformation. The Dutch cooperation focused on critical sectors such as justice, agriculture, water resources management, trade and investment, as well as defence. The justice sector, which was obviously a top priority in the aftermath of the genocide against the Tutsi, benefited from an important support from the Netherlands, with the rebuilding, renovation and equipment of courtrooms, the training of judges, prosecutors, lawyers and other professionals of justice, but also with the prosecution, trial and extradition of genocide suspects who had fled to the Netherlands.

As both countries are now transitioning from aid to trade, we have witnessed an increase of economic exchanges over the past years, mainly export of coffee, tea and horticulture products, including flowers, but also significant investments by Dutch companies in Rwanda; not to mention increased number of Dutch tourists to Rwanda, visiting our unique mountain gorillas at the bottom of volcanoes and our national parks; all of this facilitated by direct flights of KLM to Kigali.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen;

Beyond the bilateral cooperation, Rwanda and the Netherlands also share common values in the multilateral arena. One of them is an effective peacekeeping that protects civilians in armed conflicts. When the UN principle of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) was adopted by the World Summit in New York in 2005, it was endorsed by both Rwanda and the Netherlands, who then co-chaired the Group of Friends of the R2P in New York for more than a decade. Later on, when Rwanda and other UN troops and police contributing countries promoted the Kigali Principles for the Protection of Civilians, adopted in May 2015 in Rwanda's capital city, the Kingdom of the Netherlands immediately became one of the signatories.

Moreover, cooperation and exchange of information during our respective memberships to the UN Security Council, as well as collaboration in the context of the current partnership between the African Union and the European Union are also other aspects of the multilateral cooperation between Rwanda and the Netherlands. Unfortunately, as guns are yet to be definitively silenced in Africa, and as war is again striking the European continent, we believe that dialogue and cooperation are critical,

more than ever, within the framework of the UN Charter that provides for sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, and in compliance with the international humanitarian law.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen;

As I conclude my remarks, let me call on Mrs Martine Van Hoogstraten to join me, so that we can make a toast:

“To the health of His Majesty King Willem Alexander and to the friendship and cooperation between the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Republic of Rwanda”.

I thank you.