

Statement by

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On the occasion of the celebration of the 29th
Liberation Day of the Republic of Rwanda
“Kwibohora29”

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I'd like to thank Ambassador NDUHUNGIREHE for inviting me to today's reception. I am honoured to stand here in commemoration of the 29th Liberation Day and the celebration of the 61st Independence Day of the Republic of Rwanda.

While we celebrate this memorable moment, let us also reflect on the many obstacles Rwanda had to overcome. The decades that followed on independence were characterized by turbulence and trials. Ethnic tensions and political conflicts often intertwined, leading to acts of violence against innocent civilians. Tragically, these events reached a devastating climax with the Genocide against the Tutsi in 1994.

The genocide destroyed the lives of countless Rwandans, including those of moderate Hutu and others who opposed the atrocities. To honour the victims, our Director General, Mr. Marcel de Vink, participated in a Kwibuka ceremony held in Amsterdam on the 19th of April this year. During the event, he assisted in the unveiling of a commemorative statue in the Beatrixpark. He solemnly placed a wreath, alongside members of the Rwandan community. I highly recommend visiting and paying tribute to this memorial as it symbolizes the deep connection between our nations.

It is only appropriate that the Netherlands now host this monument. After all, our countries have been fostering stronger bilateral relations since 1994, and even prior to that tragic event. In the immediate aftermath of the genocide, Rwanda and the Netherlands forged a partnership in development. Guided by the conviction that there can be no peace without justice, the Netherlands became one of the major donors supporting the rebuilding of the justice sector in Rwanda.

Exemplifying our longstanding collaboration in the field of justice, a high level delegation from the Rwandan justice sector recently visited the Netherlands. During this visit, the delegation members met with esteemed institutions such as our Supreme Court and the International Criminal Court (ICC). These fruitful exchanges of perspectives benefitted *both* sides involved.

In line with the new Africa strategy of the Netherlands I would like to emphasise the importance of reciprocity. The relationship between our countries is now characterised by enhanced bilateral trade rather than development aid. This new focus marks a significant milestone in our bilateral relations. It is fitting to highlight this today, during this celebration of independence and emancipation.

By working as equal partners, we can jointly find solutions for global threats to peace and security, such as Russia's war against Ukraine. The vicinity of both our countries to armed conflict shows that peace is never self-evident. In light of the escalating tensions in Eastern DRC, I encourage Rwanda to maintain open lines of communication with its neighbouring countries and actively pursue the de-escalation of tensions in the Great Lakes Region.

In closing... Let us strive together for a peaceful future for all. Today, let us celebrate Rwanda's hard-won freedom!

Thank you.