

REPUBLIC OF RWANDA



Statement by

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

The Hague, 4th July 2023

- *Mrs Martine Van Hoogstraten, Deputy Director 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;*

1. Good evening! My wife Virginie, the whole staff of the Embassy of Rwanda and myself wish to thank you all for finding time on your busy schedule to be with us today. I will only take few minutes of your time to tell you why you were invited and what we are celebrating. This evening, we are not celebrating a national day only. We are celebrating values and principles - actually three sets of values: (1) togetherness and prosperity, (2) friendship and cooperation, and (3) multilateralism and international law.
2. We are celebrating **togetherness and prosperity** on the occasion of the National Day of Rwanda, which is a two-in-one event. Today 4th July 2023 is first and foremost the 29th anniversary of Rwanda's Liberation Day, which marks the day on which the forces of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF-Inkotanyi) overthrew the ethnic regime that was committing the genocide against the Tutsi for the previous hundred days.
3. The official theme of this Liberation Day is "*Together We Prosper*". Those two words "together" and "prosper" are equally important. Indeed, unity, reconciliation and togetherness were critical in July 1994 to rebuild today's Rwanda, because it's the destruction of the social fabric of our country over several decades, through a divisive ideology that was entertained by the colonial administration and two successive regimes, which led to the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. As for prosperity, it was the blueprint of the government of Rwanda since the end of the genocide, which led to a significant socio-economic transformation that we all witnessed over the past 29 years.
4. Today's national day is a two-in-one event as I said earlier, because we also mark the 61st anniversary of the Independence of Rwanda, which was recovered on July 1st, 1962, after more than six decades of colonisation. However, unlike the situation in almost all African countries, where the national community was united against the colonial power, Rwanda's independence in 1962 was very far from being a moment of national unity and countrywide celebration. Indeed, it took place in a context of pogroms and persecution by a part of the Rwandan community against another, with the support of the colonial administration. This event is nonetheless part of our history, reason why today we also honour our Independence Day.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen;

5. This evening, we are also celebrating **friendship and cooperation**. Friendship of Rwanda with the Kingdom of the Netherlands, but also with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, to which I am also accredited as non-resident Ambassador. Those three Baltic States have become solid economies since their independence and reliable partners of Rwanda, to which they serve as development models, especially in e-governance, FinTech, manufacturing industry and technology.
6. The friendship and cooperation with The Netherlands is a bit older and was very productive over the past 29 years. I would even say that our host country is a shareholder of our “*togetherness*”, to which they contributed by supporting our judicial sector and promoting accountability for genocide. The Netherlands is also a shareholder of our “*prosperity*”, to which they contributed by their significant and growing trade and investments with Rwanda, as well as cooperation in critical sectors such as agriculture and water resources management. As the two countries have now transitioned from aid to trade, we hope that our friendship and cooperation will continue to flourish.
7. Finally, we are today celebrating **multilateralism and international law**. This celebration is sometimes necessary in this troubled world; and there was no better city on this planet where we can do that other than The Hague, the international city of peace and justice. Rwanda, as a small country on the map but great in ideas, firmly believes in multilateralism, which is a kind of “*international togetherness*”. We all know our divergent geostrategic interests and the tensions and conflicts in our respective regions, but we believe that institutions such as the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) are playing a critical role in bridging the gaps between nations and building a better world free of chemical weapons. As we cannot all of us be “*like-minded*”, I hope that we will at least remain “*open-minded*” and continue supporting this organization and its work.
8. Rwanda also appreciates the contribution of The Hague-based international courts to peace, justice and international law. Beyond the internationally-renowned jurisdictions, I would take this opportunity to congratulate and highlight the work done by three institutions in the promotion of international law. Those are (1) The Hague Academy of International Law, which celebrated its centenary this year; (2) the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), which will celebrate its 125th anniversary next year; and (3) The Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH), which Rwanda has just decided to join. I call on all of us to continue supporting the work of these institutions and to promote international law.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen;

9. Let me conclude my remarks by making an obvious toast, together with Mrs Van Hoogstraten, whom I invite to join me: *“To our togetherness and prosperity, to our friendship and cooperation; and to multilateralism and international law”*.
10. Thank you.