

REPUBLIC OF RWANDA



Statement by

Olivier Jean Patrick NDUHUNGIREHE
Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands

On the occasion of the 29th commemoration of the
Genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi in Rwanda (Kwibuka29)

Amsterdam, 19th April 2023

- **Mr. Reinier van Dantzig**, *Deputy Mayor of Amsterdam*
- **Mr. Marcel de Vink**, *Director General for Political Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;*
- **Mrs Graciela Gatti Santana**, *President of the International Residual Mechanism for International Tribunals;*
- **Mrs Christine Safari**, *President of IBUKA-Netherlands ;*
- *Excellencies Ambassadors, Heads of Mission and International Organizations, members of the diplomatic corps;*
- *Dear survivors of the 1994 genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi,*
- *Dear compatriots and friends of Rwanda;*
- *Ladies and gentlemen;*

1. Good morning! First of all, I wish to express my gratitude to all of you for gracing us, with your presence, at this inaugural ceremony of the very first memorial in the Kingdom of the Netherlands to honour the victims of the 1994 Genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi in Rwanda. I particularly thank the City of Amsterdam for accepting our request to establish this memorial, which we have been working on together for almost two years. Indeed, it all started on a shiny Friday 2nd July 2021 at The Hortus Botanicus in Amsterdam, where I made that request to Mrs Sabine Gimbrère, Director of the International Office at the City of Amsterdam; and I thank her for kindly initiating the process.
2. I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all officials of the City who worked on this project with us, especially Mayor Femke Halsema, Sabine Gimbrère, Flora Breemer, Aniek Wichers, Jascha Jochem and Sabina Dirks. I also thank the Government of the Netherlands, through you Director General Marcel de Vink, for your unwavering support in this process, which is another demonstration of your friendship and your commitment to memory and justice. I recall that the cooperation of the Netherlands in the justice sector in the aftermath of the genocide was instrumental in rebuilding our judicial sector and ensuring accountability for the victims.
3. Finally, “*last but not least*”, I pay tribute to Mrs Christine Safari, President of the organization of genocide survivors, IBUKA-Netherlands, for her sustained leadership and tireless efforts over the past five (5) years at the helm of this organization to ensure that a genocide memorial is erected on the land of her second home, the Netherlands. The

Embassy worked on this project, since its inception, with Christine Safari and with the support of IBUKA-Netherlands as a whole. I am convinced that the Rwandan community will forever be grateful to you, dear Christine.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen;

4. This genocide memorial is the 20th established on the European continent, after those erected in France, Belgium, United Kingdom, Italy and Switzerland. This is an important milestone not only for genocide survivors, but also for young generations in the Netherlands. Indeed, the UN General Assembly resolution of 20th April 2020 urged member States to develop educational programmes that will inculcate in future generations the lessons of the genocide in order to help prevent future genocides. And we believe that a memorial is one of the most important tools to help in preserving memory and educating present and future generations about the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi.
5. In that respect, we call on all of you, Ambassadors and diplomats, to consider establishing such memorials in your respective countries and also to introduce, in your curricula, educational programmes on the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, as requested by the UN General Assembly in New York. Indeed, from all mass atrocities that were committed throughout the world, only a few were established and recognized by the international community as genocides. It is therefore important and logical that all genocides, which are important features of the history of humanity, are taught in schools of all UN member States.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen;

6. This UN General Assembly resolution of April 2020 also established the date of 7th April as the “*International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda*”. The genocide commemoration is therefore not a Rwandan day only, but an international day, as it relates to the most serious crime in the history of humanity. This is the moment to reflect, for the 29th time, on this crime, with our annual theme of “*Remember – Unite – Renew*”.
7. We remember a million souls slain during a hundred days of horror for the only crime of being born Tutsi. We remember brave women and men who, although they were not targeted, were killed for upholding the dignity of mankind, by protecting the oppressed and opposing evil. We remember because it’s in our culture to carry the eternal flame of remembrance and pass it on to the next generations. And we remember because it’s our duty, as human beings, to keep this tragedy in our minds in order to preserve the world from future genocides.

8. We unite as Rwandans, a people that share a single culture, a single language, the same beliefs and traditions, to defy the artificial divide introduced by colonial powers and ethnic regimes. We unite because, as the soldiers of RPF-Inkotanyi stopped the genocide, we turned a dark page of our history to shape a bright future for our people. We unite to restore our dignity and to build a country free of genocide, mass atrocities, discrimination and hate. And we unite because we want to show to the world that reconciliation and brotherhood are the only viable path to stability and prosperity on all continents.
9. We renew as one of the oldest nations in Africa, created half a millennium ago, destroyed three decades ago and reborn from ashes. We renew, as a society that gave genocide survivors the opportunity to heal and take their rightful place in our journey for self-reliance. We renew by seeking justice for the victims while promoting forgiveness and reconciliation. And we renew by rebuilding our country, transforming our economy, supporting the most vulnerable and preserving our planet.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen;

10. While genocide survivors and the whole nation have made tremendous strides towards a united and prosperous society, Rwanda is nonetheless deeply concerned by the ever-present denial of the 1994 genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi. Let me be clear: genocide denial is not a protected opinion under the freedom of speech, as it seeks to erase our collective memory and to weaken our ability to heal and reconcile. Genocide denial absolves the perpetrator, while blaming and tormenting the victims. As Professor Gregory Stanton stated, it's the tenth and ultimate stage of the crime of genocide itself.
11. In this respect, we have observed, in the region, here in Europe and all over the world, an increasing trend of denying, minimizing or justifying the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, using with bad faith different theories such as "*ethnic conflict*", "*Rwandan genocide*", "*double genocide*" or simply denying the fact that the genocide was planned and executed by the State. This virus was created by genocide fugitives in 1994, and disseminated around the world through their relatives, friends, communities and even through foreign politicians, scholars, journalists and members of the civil society.
12. This activism of genocide fugitives abroad is another demonstration that genocide denial is the completion of the crime of genocide, and could even be a cyclical phenomenon, if a resolute action to hold perpetrators to account is not carried out in all countries. I thank the Kingdom of the Netherlands for the action it has taken to prosecute, try and extradite an important number of suspects living in the Netherlands. I extend my appreciation to the international justice especially the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT) and its predecessor, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), for the work they have done in prosecuting the masterminds of the genocide. I take this opportunity to call on the countries that are yet to do so to act on the over a 1,000

indictments for genocide that Rwanda sent to 34 different States. Accountability is critical for Justice but it is also important to curb genocide denial.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen;

13. On the same topic, we are particularly concerned by the increasing hate speech and targeted killings against Congolese Tutsi in eastern DRC, which go hand-in-hand with the denial of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. The government of Rwanda observes that this situation in eastern DRC has the same ingredients than those that led to the genocide in Rwanda, which are mainly (1) arming civilians for a so-called “self-defence”, (2) supporting a genocidal militia like the FDLR, (3) spreading hate speech and genocide ideology, (4) targeted killings against the Congolese Tutsi, as well as (5) blaming the victims and their alleged supporters from abroad. We therefore firmly believe that the international community should follow in the steps of the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and speak up on this particular threat, which is very often overlooked in countries’ statements on the crisis in eastern DRC.
14. To conclude, *Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen*, I wish to note that, despite our “Never Again” commitment, the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi was not the last mass atrocity in the world. Over the past three decades, we witnessed another genocide, and countless crimes against humanity and war crimes on several continents. It’s therefore our collective responsibility, as the community of nations, and the responsibility of powerful nations in particular, to find a lasting solution to the current conflicts that are creating havoc, mainly in Africa, Europe and Middle East, while ensuring accountability for the civilian victims. This would be our significant contribution to peace through diplomacy, law and justice.
15. I thank you for your kind attention.