

REPUBLIC OF RWANDA



MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

**REMARKS BY THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY GENERAL
DURING THE 25TH COMMEMORATION OF THE 1994 GENOCIDE
AGAINST TUTSI
ONE UN-RWANDA**

April 12, 2019 UNDP COMPOUND, KIGALI

=====

UN Resident Coordinator;

Honourable Representatives of the Diplomatic Community;

Distinguished invited guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning,

Allow me to first express our thanks to One-UN Rwanda for inviting us to be part of this significant event to mark, for the 25th time, the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

Before starting my remarks, I would wish to take this moment to join other colleagues who spoke before me, to pay tribute to all the victims of the genocide against the Tutsi including those killed while working for the UN in Rwanda. I would also wish to tell our brothers, sisters, parents and friends who survived this horrible slaughter 25 years ago, that we stand in solidarity with you.

Dear colleagues here present,

As you all know, twenty five years ago, Rwanda faced one of the worst atrocities of the 20th century: the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. More than one million Tutsi were killed in less than 100 days. They were killed by neighbours, workmates, in-laws, friends, schoolmates, teachers, students and many others. Although these horrible acts happened and affected us all as Rwandans in one way or another, they form part of our history, but they are not our identity.

The Genocide against the Tutsi did not cost human lives only. It also destroyed the already fragile country and consigned it to a failed state status.

The aftermath of the genocide was a puzzle very hard to resolve. More than one million lives lost, millions of survivors, including widows and orphans left with no help, millions others fled the country, hundreds of thousands others facing justice because of their role in the genocide.

To inherit what remained of our country after the Genocide was such a tall order. Hope and determination were the intangible but perhaps most important investment assets the country survived by.

Ladies and gentlemen

25 years have passed. Rwanda continues to commemorate her people whose lives were cut short for being born who they were, as the best way to honour them and to remind ourselves that in man lies the potential to do such harm to fellow man, and that it is man's duty to stand up and prevent it or hold fellow man to account.

As His Excellency, President Paul Kagame said while officiating the start of this commemoration period **"Every day we learn to forgive. But we do not want to forget."** Commemoration is our strength.

Rwanda has come a long way: from despair to hope. From nearly a failed state to a functional, peaceful, stable and rapidly developing country. From an isolated country to a country with many and strong friendships. Our modest achievements are the result of commitment to deliver a democratic and unified country in a world where democracy seems to have been made synonymous with ethnic, tribal, religious or other divisive dispensation.

To you the family members of UN victims of the genocide, we stand with you. Day in day out you carry two burdens: that of the memory of your loved ones whom you lost to the genocide and that of surviving and facing life with courage. Often we don't set time aside to reflect on the burden that surviving the genocide is I suggest that we use such occasions to listen carefully to testimonies such as we just heard and make the effort to understand that surviving the genocide and facing life is a long and difficult journey.

The UN is the one place anyone would expect would be spared the kinds of horror that befell the targeted Rwandans. Your loved ones and yourselves might have believed in this theory. We usually believe the UN to be both a secure and decent space where UN Staff, whether at home or at work, would enjoy some level of inviolability. But when an entire State descends to the levels permitting the Interahamwe to decide who lives and who doesn't, and decent people find subscribing to the Interahamwe code of conduct, an option far preferable to sticking with decent conduct, then one understands how a dangerous and unimpeded ideology, can easily recruit people hitherto presumed to be rational and decent.

I am aware of former UN staff genocide suspects who, it is alleged, viciously and actively joined the Interahamwe ranks, sought out fellow UN Staff and their families and killed or handed them to killers. I am also aware of their efforts to elude justice. We do not determine how the justice system where they are functions but those who know them please tell them that we will do all that it takes to ensure that they get their day in court.

As I conclude, I once again say to our brothers, sisters and friends who survived the Genocide against the Tutsi, particularly those whose relatives and loved ones were killed while working for the UN, that we stand with you, wish you more strength and courage. Rwanda's Never Again will be for real.

Thank you Mr. Resident Coordinator for the privilege of inviting and affording me an opportunity to commemorate with you and condole with the families of the UN victims.

God bless us all.