

REPUBLIC OF RWANDA



MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

**REMARKS BY THE HON. MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY
GENERAL DURING THE NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGU**

**NOVEMBER 13, 2023
KIGALI MARRIOTT HOTEL**

**Representative of ONE-UN Rwanda;
Chairperson of the National Commission for Human Rights;
Representatives of the Diplomatic Community;
Representatives of the UN Agencies;
Colleagues representative from the Government;
Representatives of the Security Organs and Law Enforcement;
Representatives from the Civil Society;
Members from the media;
Ladies and gentlemen,**

Good morning!

Permit me to first express our sincere gratitude to all of you for having positively responded to our invitation and found time for this National Dialogue on Human Rights. We are aware that this is the first day of the week, the day on which we normally have a lot on our tables after two days off work. So, we wholeheartedly thank you.

Let me also sincerely thank ONE-UN Rwanda and the National Commission for Human Rights for their great support and collaboration in putting this day together.

Distinguished participants,

Today's Dialogue is part of the year-long initiative to mark the 75th anniversary of the UDHR, whose series of activities will culminate in a high-level event that will take place in Geneva from 11th to 12th December 2023. During this event, UN member states, including Rwanda, will make commitments on human rights in the form of pledges.

Distinguished participants;

Colleagues,

In Rwanda, we hold the principles of human rights as fundamental, integral to our nation's progress and at the very core of our society.

In fact, this is informed by our nation's history which is marked by adversity, but through the lens of our past, we have learned the hard way that respect for human rights is not a choice but a moral imperative. It is the cornerstone upon which we build a just and equitable society.

Thus, our commitment to upholding human rights is unwavering. The context of our country and the journey we have walked help us to understand the significance of providing access to justice for all our citizens and ensuring that every individual is treated with dignity and fairness under the law. To achieve this, our legal, policy and institutional frameworks continue to evolve, adapting to the changing needs

of our society while holding steadfast to the principles of justice as enshrined in our national laws as well as the regional and international human rights standards we subscribe to.

Remaining on policy, legal and institutional framework, permit me to note that last Rwanda adopted, in September 2022, her first ever criminal justice policy and an alternative dispute resolution policy. The two policies are being implemented and are expected not only to advance human rights in general and access to justice in particular but also to address the persisted challenge of overcrowding of our correctional facilities. The relevant laws are being revised to align them with the guiding principles of the two policies.

Significant reforms have been made in scientific evidence gathering, which also positively impacts the related costs. In this regard, it is worth noting that in June 2018, Rwanda launched its forensic laboratory. With this laboratory, Rwanda is capable of doing any of the required tests, such as DNA tests, establishing the authenticity of documents, detecting the presence of drugs, alcohol, or poison in one's blood, fingerprint analysis, autopsies, and ballistics to identify firearms in cases of crime, among other tests.

Recently, the Rwanda Forensic Laboratory (RFL) has undergone a transformative upgrade, emerging as the Rwanda Forensic Institute (RFI), with a renewed emphasis on research and development (R&D) and training. This transition marks a significant milestone in the field of forensics and holds great promise for the nation and the African continent as a whole.

Further, in the areas of health, on October 7, 2023, IRCAD Africa was inaugurated in Kigali, which is a training and research centre in minimally invasive surgery. The facility aims to catalyse surgical innovation, promote skill development, and improve patient outcomes across Sub-Saharan Africa.

Dear participants;

Before I conclude, permit me to note that besides the fair achievements that we have been able to register as a country and the commitment to continue improving, we at the same time acknowledge that we still have challenges to deal with. Indeed, the journey towards a more just society is ongoing.

Some of the challenges include:

- ❖ Increasing of abuse of free speech particularly on social media;
- ❖ Increasing cyber crimes
- ❖ Case backlogs
- ❖ Overcrowding in correctional facilities
- ❖ Persisting overreliance on litigation instead of other alternatives to conflict resolution

This said, permit me also to note that with the existing collaboration and strong partnership among stakeholders, we will be able to find solutions to these challenges.

Distinguished participants; Colleagues;

In conclusion, let me reiterate that Rwanda's commitments extend beyond borders. We actively engage in international dialogues, contributing to the global discourse on human rights, learning from others, and sharing our experiences.

Today, we reaffirm our dedication to this cause. The path to a society where every individual's rights are upheld demands collective effort, unwavering dedication, and a shared commitment to justice.

As we continue this National Human Rights Dialogue, let us engage in meaningful discussions, share perspectives, and chart a course forward.

THANK YOU!