



Republic of Rwanda
Ministry of Justice

REMARKS AT THE PARLIAMENTARY SEMINAR ON STRENGTHENING A HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

10 October 2025 | Parliament Building

**Honourable Deputy Speaker of Parliament,
Honourable Senators and Members of Parliament,
Dear UN Resident Coordinator and Representative of other UN Agencies,
Distinguished speakers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Good morning!

It is my distinct honour to join you at this important seminar dedicated to strengthening a human rights–based approach within parliamentary work. I wish to begin by sincerely thanking the leadership of the Parliament of Rwanda for warmly welcoming this initiative and for the strong collaboration that made it possible.

I also wish to express appreciation to the United Nations for its continued partnership and support to Rwanda in advancing our shared commitment to promote and protect the rights and dignity of Rwandans.

Hon. Members,

Thirty-one years ago, Rwanda endured one of the gravest human rights tragedies in modern history — the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. In just one hundred days, more than one million lives were lost, and the very essence of our humanity was shaken. Beyond this immense human loss, the nation’s governance fabric disintegrated. Institutions that were meant to protect citizens instead became instruments of persecution. The judiciary was decimated, law enforcement compromised, and the legislature—once meant to represent the people—was manipulated to legitimize exclusion and division.

This collapse was not only institutional but moral and societal. It showed, in the clearest terms, what happens when the rule of law erodes and when human rights are subordinated to ideology, discrimination, and impunity.

From that devastation, Rwanda embarked on one of the most remarkable reconstruction journeys of our time — a deliberate effort to rebuild not only institutions, but also trust, unity, and dignity. Guided by a new constitutional order and a shared national vision, the country chose reconciliation over revenge, and justice over despair. At the heart of this renewal lies a conviction that respect for human rights is not an abstract principle but the foundation of peace, stability, and sustainable development.

It is within this broader journey of renewal that the Parliament of Rwanda emerged as a central pillar of transformation — a forum where citizens’ voices could once again be heard, where laws would embody equality and justice, and where

oversight would ensure that never again would the State turn against its own people.

Hon. Members,

Distinguished Participants,

From the ashes of institutional collapse, Rwanda's recovery was guided by the conviction that justice, equality, and accountability must define the new Republic. Among the institutions reborn from that tragedy, Parliament became a cornerstone of renewal — embodying unity, representation, and respect for human dignity.

Since 1994, Parliament has played a decisive role in shaping Rwanda's governance framework under the 2003 Constitution and its subsequent revisions, ensuring that never again would laws be used to divide or exclude. Over the years, it has enacted several laws giving effect to constitutional guarantees and promoting justice and social cohesion — including the Penal Code and laws punishing the crime of genocide and its ideology, as well as those on gender-based violence, child protection, access to information, mental health, family law, land, inheritance, and the rights of persons with disabilities, to name but a few.

Rwanda is now a State Party to eight (08) out of nine (09) core UN human rights treaties, participates actively in the Universal Periodic Review, and is party to four key African Union human rights instruments. Parliament's leadership has ensured that these commitments are translated into national legislation and oversight practice, reinforcing Rwanda's standing as a country that learns, adapts, and leads by example.

Equally important, Parliament supported the lifting of reservations that once limited the enjoyment of fundamental rights — namely Article IX of the Genocide Convention, Article 13 of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 22 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and Articles 26 and 4 of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. By withdrawing these reservations—initially introduced in ways that restricted rights and perpetuated exclusion—Rwanda reaffirmed its determination to fully align with international human rights standards.

Through this journey, Parliament has reaffirmed its place as a forum of dialogue and accountability. The Ministry of Justice is proud to have walked alongside Parliament in advancing these reforms and looks forward to continued collaboration in strengthening Rwanda’s human rights-based governance.

Hon. Members,

Before I conclude, allow me to reiterate that today’s seminar offers a valuable space for collective reflection on how Rwanda can continue strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights through parliamentary work. This is not an exercise in evaluation, but an opportunity to consolidate progress, share perspectives, and explore innovative approaches that will make parliamentary oversight even more effective and forward-looking.

As Rwanda advances toward a knowledge-based and digital economy, new dimensions of rights are emerging — including digital rights, data protection, environmental justice, and equitable access to technology. These require

thoughtful legislation, inclusive dialogue, and close coordination among institutions to ensure that progress goes hand in hand with the protection of human dignity.

True to its tradition, the Parliament of Rwanda continues to work through broad collaboration and partnership — engaging government institutions, the National Commission for Human Rights, civil society, the private sector, and international partners. Deepening these partnerships will be key to addressing emerging challenges and ensuring that development leaves no one behind. The Ministry of Justice remains committed to working closely with Parliament and all stakeholders to strengthen Rwanda’s human rights framework and prepare for the opportunities of the future.

**Honorable Deputy Speaker,
Hon. Members,
Distinguished Guests,**

As I conclude, allow me to reaffirm that the legacy of 1994 reminds us never to take institutional integrity or the protection of human rights for granted. The progress Rwanda has made — grounded in good governance, accountability, and respect for human dignity — stands as a collective achievement of all branches of Government, with Parliament continuing to play a pivotal and enduring role.

I am confident that the reflections shared in this seminar will further strengthen our partnership and inspire renewed commitment to building a just, inclusive, and rights-respecting Rwanda for all.

I thank you for your kind attention.