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Commemoration of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda - *Kwibuka27* “Remember-Unite-Renew”



Today, 7th April 2021 marks the 27th Commemoration of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, an important occasion to remember the lives lost, show solidarity with survivors and unite to ensure such tragedy never happens again in Rwanda or elsewhere in Africa and beyond. The commemoration of 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda provides an opportunity to learn about Rwanda’s story of reconciliation and nation building among others.

Against this backdrop, the African Union Commission (AUC), through its Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security in close collaboration with the Embassy of the Republic of Rwanda in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, organized a commemorative event at the AU Headquarters under the theme “**Remember-Unite-Renew**”, to mark this historical moment.

Due to restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the event was organized in a hybrid format, with the AU Commission top leadership and some representatives of AU member states and the UNOAU present at the Nelson Mandela Hall, while other members of the Diplomatic Corps, representatives of UN agencies, AU organs, religious institutions, human rights institutions, intergovernmental organizations, civil society organizations, think tanks, international organizations, academic institutions and staff of the African Union Commission took part in the event via the Zoom digital platform.

The commemoration is organized annually by the African Union Commission following a decision of the African Union General Assembly recognizing the 7th of April as a day of remembrance of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda and reaffirming Africa’s resolve to prevent and fight genocide ideology on the continent.

The decision was recommended by the African Union Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) during its special session on the 10th Commemoration of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.

In his address, H.E. Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, AUC Chairperson stated that the African Union together with the Government of Rwanda commemorate this important Day, as they have been doing since 2010. “We want to remind Africans and the world that an unnamed tragedy has unfolded in Rwanda and must never be forgotten. We want to reiterate our solidarity with the survivors and the families of the victims who are marked for life, in their flesh and soul, by these events. Finally, we want to tell humanity that such horrors must not happen again, neither in Africa nor elsewhere in the world,” emphasized Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat.



The AUC Chairperson seized this opportunity to remind all Africans that the ethnic reflexes, community divisions and exclusion still existing in most of our states, worsened by mismanagement of these phenomena, can lead to tragedies which Africa does not need. “May the tragedy experienced in Rwanda 27 years ago help Africa to protect itself against the repetition of such a phenomenon and serve as leaven to build an Africa where ethnic diversity will be considered as a wealth and no longer as a weakness,” concluded the AUC Chairperson.

In her brief remarks, Ms. Hanna Tetteh, the Special Representative of the UNSG to the African Union and Head of the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU), stated that we should use this opportunity to remember those terrible events that took place in Rwanda in 1994 over a period of 100 days and remember that it could have been prevented. She further added that “we must utilize our early warning mechanisms for the protection of human rights”.

Amb. Birtukan Ayano, representing the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, said, “Today, Ethiopia joins all Rwandans to honor the memory of the victims”. She concluded by urging AU Member States to ensure that impunity is not tolerated in any part of our continent.

On her part, H.E. Amb. Hope Tumukunde Gasatura, Ambassador of the Republic of Rwanda to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the AU, said “Rwanda has been on a healing and reconciliation process as a nation. Promoting unity and reconciliation, especially in societies divided along ethnic, racial, religious or any other basis is paramount in building the next generation of Africans and the Africa We Want”. She added that, “As a pan African institution championing peace and good governance, the time should be now for the African Union to be more proactive in campaigning against occurrences or re-occurrences of hate crimes and genocide elsewhere on the continent”.



Amb. Hope Tumukunde emphasized that the AU should play a proactive role in denouncing discrimination, marginalization, tribalism and manipulation of ethnicity that creates fertile conditions for hate crimes and ideologies of genocide to thrive. She encouraged the AU engagement in education campaigns towards tolerance and diversity management that can be a source of nation building.

Ms Sonia Mugabo, a genocide survivor, narrated her painful experience and said, “When moments are tough, I am often reminded of remarks I heard from H.E President Paul Kagame during the 17th Commemoration of the Genocide against the Tutsi. He said, ‘Let

us support them and support each other. Let's face our challenges together. Let us confront those who look down on us, and lift ourselves up. Let us fight with the consequences of our history and Triumph. Let's persevere together so that we can build a better future for Rwandans because it is possible – we cannot wait for anyone to do this for us'. The most important thing is truth, dignity, and that enduring Rwandan spirit – the spirit that must never die.

At 12h00 all participants observed a minute of silence in memory of the victims of the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, following a call to light a candle as a sign of hope and to pay tribute to the victims of the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. It must be noted that all the speakers saluted the resilience of the survivors and the resolve of Rwandans to unite and heal together and called for Africa and the world to ensure hatred and divisions have no place in our societies. The event was moderated by Amb. Salah S. Hammad, a human rights expert, in the Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department.

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