

**PRESS RELEASE N°122/2016****THE COMMEMORATION OF THE 22ND ANNIVERSARY OF THE RWANDA
GENOCIDE
UNDER THE THEME: *KWIBUKA22: FIGHTING GENOCIDE IDEOLOGY***

Addis Ababa, 07 April 2016: The African Union Commission (AUC) in close collaboration with the Embassy of Rwanda in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia has commemorated today the 22nd Anniversary of the Rwanda Genocide. The commemoration took place under the theme: ***“Fighting the Genocide Ideology”***.

The commemoration of the Rwanda Genocide is annually organised by the African Union following the African Union policy organ decision to recognise the 7th of April as a day of remembrance of the victims of the genocide and reaffirmation of Africa’s resolve to prevent and fight genocide on the Continent. The decision was recommended by the African Union Permanent Representatives Committee during its special session on the Commemoration of the 10th Anniversary of the Genocide in Rwanda, and later was adopted by the AU Policy Organs.

The purpose of the commemoration is to among others continuously awaken greater awareness of the African peoples and the international community on the value of life and humanity, the ill effects of genocide and to renew Africans’ collective commitment to protect and uphold fundamental human rights. **“Kwibuka”**, which means 'to remember' in Kinyarwanda, is a global programme of activities and events, in which communities and people participate to commemorate the genocide.

H.E. Dr. Aisha L. Abdullahi, Commissioner for Political Affairs addressed the event on behalf of H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission. Dr. Abdullahi indicated that “our coming together should serve as awareness creation for Africa and the world over; it should equally symbolize for us a stark reminder of the sanctity of human life and encourage us to renew our collective commitment to protect and uphold fundamental human rights in Africa and elsewhere.” She further added that “on this commemorative occasion, our shared dream of a prosperous, poverty-free, a just, peaceful, democratic and well-governed Continent as succinctly captured in the African Union Agenda 2063 should be foremost in our list of priorities.”

Dr. Abdullahi concluded by inviting all African people “to reflect on how to support the efforts of the African Union Commission and the AU Organs with a human rights mandate to successfully celebrate 2016 as the Year of Human Rights in Africa with Special Focus on the Rights of Women.”

H.E. Ambassador Taye Atske-Selassie, State Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs addressed the event on behalf of the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Amb. Atske-Selassie indicated that “the Genocide should act as a root call for Africa to build its own capacity to prevent the occurrence of genocides and crimes against humanity and any such atrocities to happen again. He elaborated the OAU established the central organ for conflict prevention, management and resolution. Later AU set up the peace and security counsel as one of AU’s principle organs for Africa’s peace and security architecture. This is an impressive affirmation of the continent’s determination to give the AU the rights to intervene in a member state in case of such grave circumstances”.

H.E Mrs. Hope TUMUKUNDE GASATURA, Ambassador of the Republic of Rwanda to the Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to African Union delivered a statement on behalf of the people and Government of Rwanda. Amb Gasatura indicated that “this year’s theme is focused on **Fighting Genocide Ideology**. The Ambassador also stated that “the reason why the genocide ideology should persistently be fought is because the perpetrators of this atrocity and their sympathizers have continued to deny it and distort the truth about what happened.” She further added that “denial of the genocide that happened in Rwanda ultimately is a continuation of genocide itself. Some scholars have described it as a continuing attempt to destroy the victim and group psychologically. In other words, it is another way of continuing the hunting and the killing of innocent people.”

During the event Religious Leaders from the Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim and Protestant communities performed prayers in the memory of the fallen victims. Also students from Cruze Academy and South West School performed musical dramas around the theme of this commemoration. Also Jessie Gaju Mugabo, a young poet from Rwanda delivered an emotional poem describing the journey from genocide to nation building and reconciliation.

At the end of the programme, H.E. Ambassador Taye Atske-Selassie, State Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, H.E Mrs. Hope TUMUKUNDE GASATURA, Ambassador of the Republic of Rwanda unveiled the Cornerstone of the AU Human Rights Memorial Project (AUHRM).



The Memorial Site is meant to serve as a reminder that never again shall we allow violations of human rights and horrendous calamities to happen on our beloved continent. The African Union Human Rights Memorial (AUHRM) project aims to preserve the memory of gross human rights abuses, in recognition of past suffering and to prevent such occurrences in future, in the interest of democracy peace and security. It will celebrate African struggles against slavery and colonialism. It will also celebrate our triumph as Africans against Rwanda genocide and apartheid in South Africa in 1994.

The event was attended by Commissioners of the African Union Commission, Members of the Permanent Representatives (PRC), Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps, Representatives of ECA, UN Agencies, International and Regional Organizations, Religious Leaders, Distinguished Members of the Rwandan Community, Students from Addis Ababa schools and staff of the African Union Commission.

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