



**STATEMENT BY
H.E AMBASSADOR HOPE TUMUKUNDE GASATURA
RWANDA'S PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE AU
ON THE OCCASION OF
KWIBUKA 22: FIGHTING GENOCIDE IDEOLOGY
APRIL 7TH, 2016**

Excellency Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini- Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission;

Your Excellency, Ambassador Taye Atseke-selassie, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia;

Excellency Mr. Erastus J.O Mwencha, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission;

Your Excellencies Commissioners, Ambassador Smail Chargue Commissioner of Peace and Security and Dr Aisha Laraba Abdullahi, Commissioner for Political Affairs, in the AUC

Excellencies Colleagues/Ambassadors/

Representatives of International organizations;

Distinguished representatives of your respective missions;

Religious leaders;

Rwandan Community:

Colleagues/Friends;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

On behalf of the government and the people of Rwanda, Let me start by thanking all of you for gathering here to today to Commemorate for the 22nd time the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. We are deeply humbled by your presence!

Today, like every year, we are here to remember. Every year, we remember. We remember more than one million lives that were lost in Rwanda, and we stand in solidarity with survivors and unite to ensure that it never happens again – in Rwanda or

anywhere else. It is also an opportunity for us as Rwandans to share our story of reconciliation and nation building with Africa and the rest of the world.

This year's theme is focused on ***Fighting Genocide Ideology***. As we commemorate and honor the memory of the over one million souls who lost their lives under the cruel hand of their fellow would be brothers and sisters, and neighbors, we also stand together as Africa and the wider international Community in resolve to fight Genocide ideology wherever its exists.

The reason why 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. 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. And this, my country will relentlessly continues to fight.

I believe we are gathered here as well to declare that Genocide Ideology is unacceptable, be it on our continent or elsewhere in the world. That is why the AU took a Decision to recognize 7th April as a day of remembrance of the victims of the Genocide against the Tutsi and to reaffirm Africa's resolve to prevent and Fight against genocide on our continent. The panel discussion tomorrow will go into the details of genocide denial and its manifestations.

Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

As we remember, we also invite the rest of the world to pause and share in this act of remembrance and to learn from our tragic experience in the hope that our horrors do not befall others, certainly not on our watch and not through our collective inaction or

indifference as happened in Rwanda in 1994. This is our call to Africa and to the global community to stand together against genocide.

Equally, as we remember, we focus on the imperative of unity and reconciliation because it is a time also to reflect on the journey Rwanda has travelled since 1994; particularly to demonstrate that out of the desolation of genocide has risen a spirit of unity that allowed the rebirth of a new Rwanda, united and reconciled.

Self- extinction happened because we forgot the importance of unity and embraced divisionism. We promoted what divided us and forgot our commonality and our common humanity. Over the last 22 years, we have sought to rebuild our singularity as a nation and as a people. This has informed our political choices; particularly in as far as they put citizens' rights at the forefront of all governance processes. Contrary to the pre-1994 period when the politics of exclusion reigned supreme, today, our constitution is built on one simple, but unimpeachable truth: that Rwanda belongs to all of us; that staying together and working together is the only way to development.

In the past 22nd years, Rwandans have given and continue to give their best in rebuilding our country. The progress is clear to all and the achievements continue. Many wonder what our secret is. It is simply good political leadership, patriotism, sacrifice, resilience, and hard work but most importantly choosing to stay together and working together, and thinking big or dreaming big. These has resulted in remarkable achievements like: Rwanda having an average annual GDP growth rate between 7%-8% since 2003; free primary & secondary education(9-12YBE); Over 93 % of the population under community based health insurance which in turn led to a huge reduction of child & maternal motility rates ; Women holding 64% of seats in Rwanda's parliament, and this female majority has ensured that laws aimed at raising the status of women and children are at the forefront of political discourse; and reconciliatory justice through the Gacaca courts .

I urge Rwandans here today to stay committed and continue rebuilding this new nation defined by forgiveness, peace and reconciliation. Forgiveness is a conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance towards a person or group who has harmed you, regardless of whether they actually deserve your forgiveness or not.

Like I said earlier, the Rwanda history should be a lesson and a reminder to Rwandans and the rest of the world that Genocide should never take place again. As we move together, I plead that we all stand together in fighting Genocide ideology. We have to fight it because it still alive. Those who took part in Genocide and their sympathizers continue to deny the truth about it. When considering all Genocides recorded in history we only notice perpetuated actions but the reality is that those actions are results of ideologies.

Excellencies;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Having said this, as President Paul Kagame put it during the 20th commemoration of the Genocide last year, I quote: *“We did not need to experience genocide to become a better people. It simply should never have happened. No country, in Africa or anywhere else, ever needs to become “another Rwanda”. But if a people’s choices are not informed by historical clarity, the danger is ever present”*

For Africa therefore, a time like this, is an opportunity to reflect as a continent and to resolve to fight Genocide ideology on the continent and elsewhere in the world and to shape a better continent free of conflicts. We should therefore strive to achieve our own target of a conflict free Africa by 2020.

Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The drama from by our young people from schools in Ethiopia a while ago was so touching! And I wish to encourage more schools in Ethiopia and other parts of African

to perform such dram as a way of enlightening our young generation on the tragic history of our continent. This would also be one of the ways of fighting genocide ideology.

I take this opportunity to thank the different schools - those who had the opportunity to present to us to us today as well as those who were not able to present. We know enormous time and effort has been put in this and I thank you for your great effort and dedication.

I equally thank the AU department of political affairs which has always promoted this through competitions among schools thereby allowing the accumulation of knowledge on this very crucial subject.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Before I conclude, let me use this opportunity to inform that the discussion on fighting genocide Ideology and denial will continue tomorrow from 3:00pm – 5:00pm at the medium hall of the New AU Conference Center. You are all invited for this session and I believed you have already received a formal invitation from my Embassy or from the AU Commission. The session will include panelists to share perspectives on Fighting Genocide Ideology. There will also be an opportunity for an interactive discussion on the subject. You are most welcome to contribute to this debate.

In conclusion, let me once again thank the department of Political Affairs for tirelessly working around the corner to ensure this event happens annually and well organized – thank you Political Affairs.

I thank you for your kind attention