

AFRICAN UNION

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STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION
COMMISSION, MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT, ON THE OCCASION OF
THE COMMEMORATION OF THE 24th ANNIVERSARY OF THE
GENOCIDE AGAINST THE TUTSIS IN RWANDA

7 APRIL 2018
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

Madame Permanent Representative of the Republic of Rwanda,
Chairperson of the Permanent Representatives' Committee of the
Member States of the African Union,

Ambassadors and other representatives of member states,

Deputy Chairperson of the Commission,

Commissioners,

Dear brother Adama Dieng, Special Adviser of the United Nations
Secretary-General for the Prevention of Genocide,

Distinguished representatives of the diplomatic and consular corps,

Distinguished representatives of civil society and religious confes-
sions,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is with deep emotion that I address you on the occasion of the commemoration of the 24th anniversary of the Genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda.

Emotion, because we will forever remain scarred by this horrible crime which saw the massacre of more than a million people.

Emotion, because the trauma resulting from the genocide is ever present in the everyday lives of the survivors. How can this not be after hearing the heartbreaking testimonies of survivors?

Emotion, because by gathering here on the occasion of this commemorative ceremony, as we do every year, we affirm our collective rejection of the hatred and stigmatization of the other, which are the very bases of any genocidal endeavor.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This year, the Genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda is commemorated under the three-pronged theme of: "Remembrance, Unity and Renewal".

Remembrance is an imperative.

It is an imperative towards the victims, whose memory must remain alive and be preserved.

It is an imperative in order not to fall into the trap of the trivialization of the crime of crimes.

It is an imperative to lay solid foundations for prevention and to make the too-often-chanted "Never Again" not just a slogan, but a reality.

These are all reasons that bear out the importance of this commemoration.

I would like, therefore, from the bottom of my heart, to thank all those who responded to the invitation sent by the African Union Commission and the Embassy of the Republic of Rwanda in Ethiopia.

Your presence is highly symbolic.

It is a testament to your commitment to honour the victims, show your solidarity with the survivors and maintain the necessary vigilance against the ideologies of hate, those of inhumanity.

This mobilization is all the more necessary and welcome as our world seems, unfortunately, to have once again entered an era of inward looking cultural attitudes, of rejection and fear of the other, of rising national selfishness.

Minorities have, once again, become easy targets for all kinds of anathemas and, sometimes, victims of mass violence.

In some places, racist rhetoric and the generalisations associated with it are no longer the preserve of extremist groups on the fringe of society. The opprobrium, which once acted as a safeguard against such statements, seems to be no longer in place.

The tolerance of the unacceptable continues to grow.

We are concomitantly witnessing a weakening of multilateralism and the institutions that emanate from it. Consequently, our ability to collectively address the global challenges confronting us is greatly compromised or, at the very least, questioned.

In this fight against the forces of hate, against the regression of the values of tolerance and solidarity, the African Union must fully play its role. This should be all the more so, as Africa has experienced and continues to experience violent conflicts, extremely violent conflicts.

It is hence vital that we remain ever vigilant.

We have all the necessary tools, be they normative or political.

We must work more resolutely towards their implementation and ensure compliance with these instruments.

We must make our voices heard loudly and clearly in denouncing all that contributes to the spread of hatred and intolerance.

This fight must also be that of our youth. Their capacity for outrage must remain intact, and their idealism encouraged.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Unity and Renewal are the two other elements of the theme of this commemoration.

Permit me to seize this opportunity to dwell on the significance of these two words and highlight the achievements of Rwanda.

Here, I would like to pay tribute to the Government and people of Rwanda for making reconciliation their motto and the unity of their country the antidote to hatred.

Rwanda has succeeded beyond all expectations.

It succeeded because it harnessed the genius of its people to trigger the rebirth called for by the situation.

It succeeded because it sought solutions adapted to the challenges it faced, particularly by reinventing traditions that had proved their worth, in order to promote co-existence, administer justice and entrench reconciliation.

It succeeded because the political will was there, because it never faltered, despite the challenges and complexity of the task that was initi-

ated. It is therefore only appropriate to pay tribute to President Paul Kagamé for his leadership.

But Rwanda went even further.

It made Reconciliation and Unity the linchpin of its Renewal. A Renewal embodied by the remarkable results achieved in terms of governance and socio-economic development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, we commemorate the anniversary of an unspeakable crime.

We mourn the victims, eliminated in the most atrocious way, not for what they did, but for what they were.

We share the unfathomable pain of those of their loved ones who escaped the atrocious fate promised to them by their executioners.

We mark our solidarity with Rwanda and its people, knowing that this solidarity was sorely lacking when they needed it the most.

We are also here to celebrate the strength of mankind, its capacity to emerge from the greatest disasters, to overcome the most gaping divisions.

Rwanda is the symbol of this resilience.

Its achievements give rise to the hope that no abyss, however deep, can destroy the will to live, the values that must underpin our common humanity.

Yes, from the bottom of the abyss, Rwanda is standing today.

It has climbed to the top of its thousand hills, irrigated by the blood of its children.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Close to a quarter of a century after the Genocide against the Tutsis, I would like to emphasize why we are gathered here today:

- to remember: let us all be driven by the need for remembrance, in order to draw lessons from our failure to prevent the genocide, but also to remain vigilant and reject ALL revisionist attempts;
- to remain united in paying our respect to the victims and expressing our solidarity with the survivors; and
- to renew our resolve that Never Again shall we allow such a tragedy to occur.

I thank you for your attention.