

**STATEMENT ON THE OCCASION OF THE 27<sup>TH</sup> COMMEMORATION OF THE 1994 GENOCIDE AGAINST THE TUTSI IN RWANDA, KWIBUKA27**

- ✚ Excellency, Chairperson of the African Union Commission,
- ✚ Excellency, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission,
- ✚ Excellences Commissioners of the African Union Commission,
- ✚ The MoS in the MoFA of the Government of the FDRE ;
- ✚ Excellency, Chairperson of the PRC,
- ✚ Excellences Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
- ✚ Excellency, Special Representative of the UNSG & Head of the UNoAU
- ✚ Heads of African Union Organs and Specialized Agencies,
- ✚ Heads of Regional Liaison Office,
- ✚ Representative Religious Institutions, and Civil Society Organizations
- ✚ Heads of United Nations Agencies and other international organizations
- ✚ Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Let me begin by greeting you all and thank you all for joining us in this 27th commemoration of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. As it is now a custom, the 7<sup>th</sup> April of every year is a day of reflection not only for Rwanda but for the AU, and the entire world as we pause to commemorate, to honor, to remember the lives lost, and to show solidarity with survivors. For Rwanda. It is also a time to reflect on the journey of reconciliation and nation building. We as a people have undertaken since after 1994.
2. This year's theme as previous years is: **“Remember, Unite, and Renew”**
3. **Allow to be me to remind some of the distinctive features of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi :**
  - **It didn't begin** with the plane crash, or the killing, but started with the ideology of hatred, with division-the them and we, with discrimination, with quota system, with exclusion, with ethnic ideology and profiling and registration of Tutsis and non-Tutsis, with atrocity speech, with dehumanization ( Cockroaches and snakes, and other animalizing names); with incitement to murder, and so many others features
  - **Such that** from the 7 April 1994, the genocidal government immediately started to implement a long-time plan they had to exterminate the Tutsi. More than One Million Tutsi was massacred by Interahamwe militia and government forces over a period of just 100 days. The goal was to **totally eliminate the Tutsi across the country** with high participation of ordinary citizens killing their fellow citizens and backed by the central government

and local leaders. **However**, the greatest thing is that genocide was also stopped by a group of other Rwandans—the then Rwanda Patriotic Army forces who rescued thousands of Tutsi.

- The 1994 genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi has had repercussions outside Rwanda's borders. Because hundreds of thousands of civilians were forced by genocidaires to leave Rwanda to go to the then Zaire to serve as their human shield. Since then, the refugee camps, supervised by the killers, have become militarized, and served as rear bases for several incursions against Rwanda and during which many civilians were massacred.
- 4. Contrary to the denialism ideology, the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda was planned, planned by the then government and made it clear that their intention was to exterminate the Tutsis.
- 5. Most of the above features and evidence of genocide tendencies date back in 1957 with the introduction of an ideology that sowed hatred among citizens and that sought to deny right to exist.
- 6. In 1959, unabated hate speeches and open promotion of discrimination gave rise to massacres, persecutions, refugees, and many other forms of violence against the Tutsi in their own country. As the years went by, hatred, persecutions and killing of Tutsis was no longer just state-owned, but also ingrained in the general population system;
- 7. In 1963, the first of such open killings began and in 1973, persecutions reached the education sector where Tutsis were denied education and killings ensued while others fled for their lives until 1994 when the genocide was just a climax.
- 8. While the genocide constitutes one of the gravest crimes against humanity, it does not happen in isolation as explained above. Hate crimes and genocide are preceded by the proliferation of targeted hate speech, dehumanization, and violence incitement towards minorities. In Rwanda, the genocide against the Tutsi was preceded and prepared by widespread hate ideology and propaganda.
- 9. 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.
- 10. The AU should also 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. The AU should engage in education campaigns towards tolerance and diversity management that can be a source of nation building;

- 11.** As much as the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi was distinctive and unusual due to the nature of its organization and execution with a high participation of ordinary citizens killing their fellow citizens backed by high officials from the central government and local leaders, it also took the courage and strength of its own young citizens stop it. The Rwanda Patriotic Army who rescued thousands of Tutsis.
- 12.** Today, in remembrance, the people of Rwanda will forever be grateful to these young men and women that composed the RPA/RPF Inkotanyi Forces who took the lead in rescuing the Tutsis who were being massacred and the Hutus who had refused to join the Hutu extremists in planning and carrying out the genocide. This courage can be a learning lesson to authorities and different communities across Africa to strive to solve conflicts and contain occurrences of hate speech and acts of human rights violations on the continent
- 13.** This annual AU Commemoration event is indeed an opportunity to galvanize all efforts at national, regional, continental levels and indeed international level against genocide ideology and to collectively fight against all forms and manifestations of genocide and of course other extreme ideologies and denials of genocide and to jointly commit to justice and the fight against impunity
- 14.** The UN Resolution 2150 of 16 April 2014 on Threats to international peace and security calls upon States to recommit to prevent and fight against genocide, and other serious crimes under international law, notably genocide denials by individuals (Scholars, researchers, lawyers, politicians) and non-government organizations who are active in developing theories on denial. It is our sincere wish that the AU plays a more pragmatic role in exposing and strongly acting against negations and holding responsible and punishing seriously such sponsors and promoters

**15.** For instance, some countries have enacted laws that punish such crimes that deny, underestimate or trivialize the existence of a crime of genocide. Negationism must be taken seriously by States and punished seriously. AU member states are called upon to follow suit so that together, we can work towards prevention of occurrences of such atrocities.

**16.** Recall that on December 15, 1999, the Carlson's report established the responsibility of the international community which failed to prevent or stop the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. We desire that such negligence on the part of the international community happens not again and we call upon the African Union and its organs to:

- a) Intentionally plan and execute programs that can effectively combat extreme ideologies including genocide ideology. For example, there should be a continental solidarity in educating African citizens in a sustainable matter. Genocide and other grave atrocities are not things that should be left behind as if they in the past.
- b) The need to make use of the AU early warning mechanism in place for preventative purposes and enable an early response before violent conflicts and genocide cannot be overemphasized.
- c) We call upon the AU to consider appointment of a special envoy whose office can be dedicated to work with relevant AU institutions to research and report on acts of extreme ideologies that can lead to genocide and who can in turn propose actions by the Assembly;
- d) The proposed AU Human Rights Memorial project that will honor the victims of major human rights atrocities in Africa including but not limited to the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda has been welcomed. But it has been long overdue. We request that Member States prioritize the realization of this project by enabling the construction phases of the project.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

16. Rwanda has been in 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.

16. Nonetheless, it is imperative that while societies and authorities seek reconciliation, perpetrators of such acts as crimes against humanity and genocide should not be left free. We call upon the AU member states that continue to shelter the perpetrators of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi to work with the government of Rwandan or the UN residual mechanism to facilitate justice and fighting against impunity. There are many international arrest warrants issued by Rwanda and the ICTR and its residual mechanism which should be executed.

17. Based on the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, States have an international obligation and responsibility to arrest and try or extradite those implicated in acts of genocide. (Article 1, 1948 Convention).
- 18) Lastly, I cannot conclude without paying tribute to the strength and the resilience of the Survivors of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda - like Sonia Mugabo who was strong enough to share her story today.
- 19) The Strength, Courage and Patience and forgiving of Survivors have hugely contributed for the rebuilding of Rwanda.
20. Thank you to everyone who have joined us in this commemoration of our loved ones today