

**Kwibuka28 – Statement by H.E Amb. Hope Tumukunde Gasatura on the
28th Commemoration of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi: Addis Ababa, 7th April 2022**

1. **Your Excellencies the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Special Representative, Commissioner, my Esteemed Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen-All Protocols observed**
2. On behalf of the Government and the people of Rwanda, I would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for your presence here today.
3. Your solidarity with the people of our country, as we come together to remember those who were killed in the Genocide against the Tutsi 28 years ago, is deeply appreciated.
4. Today, the 7th April, marks the beginning of the Kwibuka Mourning period. On this day in 1994, killings began which resulted in the murder of over 1 million innocent Rwandans, over less than 100 days. Across our country, countless more innocent lives were changed forever, on account of injury, displacement, and rape.
5. Almost every Rwandan lost a family member in that period – it can be easy to forget, among the staggering statistics, that each and every one of the victims of this senseless brutality were friends, colleagues, fathers, mothers, siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, and children.
6. The spirit of every innocent Rwandan whose life was lost is with us here today as we come together to commemorate this tragedy.
7. Today, I want to take an opportunity to talk about why Kwibuka – which in our language means “Remember” – and why remembering 1994 is still so important to us 28 years later.
8. To talk about why, as Africans, we should come together as one to commemorate one of our continent’s darkest days.
9. To talk about how we can look to our past to help us build, together, a more peaceful and prosperous future for Africa.
10. Above all, I want to talk about the importance of African solidarity – about how we can stand united, as brothers and sisters, to ensure that the tragedy that beset our country in 1994 is never repeated on African soil, or indeed anywhere on earth.
11. One of the cruellest tragedies of 1994 was the abandonment of Rwanda by the international community.

12. As preparations unfolded under the eyes of the world, as militiamen took to the streets with their machetes, murdering, raping, and tearing our country apart, under the gaze of the United Nations, and the world's media, the rest of the planet watched on, leaving Rwanda to its fate.
13. "Never Again" is an enduring phrase which has echoed around the world in response to Genocide – from the Holocaust, to Bosnia, to Cambodia, to Rwanda. Yet time and again, those words have not been translated into action. Those of us here today, who proudly represent our own African nations in this esteemed forum, are entrusted with the responsibility to ensure that "Never Again" is a spirit of action – not just a platitude.
14. As I stand here in Mandela Hall, named after one of Africa's greatest sons, one of its greatest champions of peace, forgiveness, compassion, and human dignity, I am reminded of the strength of our pan-African bond.
15. As we remember 1994, we should also remember African heroes who fought tirelessly in 1994, who risked everything to protect innocent lives in my country.
16. One of these heroes, whom I wish to remember today, was the Senegalese Captain Mbaye Diagne. Captain Diagne, stationed as a peacekeeper in Kigali in 1994, was a man who embodied bravery, compassion, and heroism. On this day, 28 years ago, it was Captain Diagne who rescued the children of then-Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana, one of the first victims of the Genocide.
17. Captain Diagne did not stop at that. Every day he fought in Kigali for the lives of the innocent, scouring the city for those seeking refuge, smuggling them under blankets in the back of his car, risking his life to pass through roadblocks manned by vicious, murderous militiamen. By some estimates, Captain Diagne saved over 1,000 lives of Rwandan men, women, and children.
18. Day after day, Captain Diagne put the safety of others above his own. Time and again, he risked his life. And tragically, he was not able to save himself. On the 31st May, he was instantly killed in crossfire, as he was once again held up at a military roadblock.
19. Captain Diagne's legacy is one of bravery, of compassion, and of resolute determination. But above all, it is a reminder of the spirit of African solidarity, of the historic bond that we share, from Cairo to Cape Town, from Dakar to Djibouti. Bound up in this is a common responsibility that we, particularly those of us in this room entrusted with leadership, have. To devote our lives, as Captain Diagne did, to seeking peace for our continent and its people, to steer our nations away from violence, and above all, to protect innocent lives.

20. This year's theme for Kwibuka is **“Remember, Unite, Renew”**. As members of the African Union, we must take heed of this message. As we stand here today, we remembering the horrors of 1994, horrors which must never be repeated again anywhere on earth. It is an opportunity to reiterate that we must come unite, and stand together against Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity, and we must renew our efforts to prevent these evils.
21. I want to urge my colleagues here today to stand with Rwanda in the following efforts:
22. **Firstly, we must ensure that across our continent, we are proactively engaging and educating our societies on values that will prevent these types of violence from recurring. We must bear responsibility for proactive legislative, institutional, and educational measures to ensure that the seeds of genocide – which are division, hatred, and discrimination – are not allowed to germinate anywhere in Africa.** We are aware that the Chairperson of the Commission is seized with the PSC request to have a special envoy on prevention of Genocide which would be a huge factor in all this.
23. A central part of this is remembering and reflecting on the past, and learning from our history. In this spirit, we are looking forward to continuing our discussions about a memorial for the Genocide against the Tutsi at the African Union Headquarters within the bigger human rights memorial project and the implementation of the Accra Budget session decision on the virtual memorial project. These initiatives, which promote prevention through education, are vital in safeguarding our future from such atrocities.
24. Secondly, it is high time that we move from aspiration to action on measures that will stop these types of crimes in their tracks. For instance, I urge all member states who have not yet signed instruments the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948, to do so immediately.
25. Finally, we have a responsibility to honour the memory of those who we lost in 1994, and to set a powerful and lasting precedent for those who may commit similar crimes in the future, to seek justice, and eliminate any impunity for those who have perpetrated Genocide. 28 years on, many of those involved in orchestrating or carrying out the atrocities of 1994 still live freely on our continent and across the world. We *must* stand together as a continent to ensure that these people cannot escape justice that their impunity cannot endure.
26. As well as our responsibility to the victims of the Genocide, and their families, we have a responsibility to set a powerful precedent, a deterrent which ensures that anyone considering such crimes in the future is aware of the full power of justice on this continent.

27. To close my speech, I want to talk about Africa's future.
28. Rwanda's youngest generations, those born in the 21st Century, have lived peaceful, secure, and dignified lives. They have access to quality education and healthcare, and opportunities to seek careers in any sector they might choose. These benefits and these opportunities are available to every single Rwandan – regardless of gender, ethnicity, or any other pre-determined factor.
29. Rwanda's rebirth is a reminder that as Africans, we *can* build lasting peace and prosperity, even from the most desperate of situations. As we look forward to Africa's next generation, Rwanda's example can serve as a beacon of hope for any country which has suffered in similar ways to Rwanda – *that tomorrow is a new day*, that a new dawn of prosperity and peace is possible, when guided by a powerful and proud vision of equality, reconciliation, and national unity.
30. It is our responsibility, as a brotherhood of nations, to prioritise these strong visions, and the hopes of our people – to protect all our citizens against threats and evils, including Genocide.
31. In the memory of those who we lost 28 years ago, we must strive to create a future that is built on peace, unity, and reconciliation, not on division and hatred.
32. I look forward, in this 20th Anniversary year of the African Union, to continue to deepen our bonds as Africans and build the foundations for a peaceful and prosperous future.
33. Thank you so much for being here, and for standing with Rwanda.
34. God Bless the souls of all those we have lost, God Bless You, and God Bless Africa.
