



ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT PAUL KAGAME

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We are living through a period of unprecedented progress in human development. The success of the Millennium Development Goal framework demonstrates that international cooperation remains strong, though we wish the expected results would come faster.

Even on climate change, if the public and private sectors work together to increase investment in scientific research, we can look forward to a future where countries no longer have to choose between green energy and economic growth.

While we work on building peace and well-being in Africa, crises elsewhere in the world have aroused grave concern. Efforts to address them seem to have little effect, and in some cases may even make things worse.

Two critically important public goods have been consistently undervalued by the international system in its approach to conflict resolution and peacebuilding: These are physical security and national identity.



When security breaks down, the human costs are enormous. Extremists and opportunists are empowered. Citizens lose faith in public institutions, as grievances are settled in the street. As a result, sustainable gains in good governance cannot be made.

It takes time and patience to build a better politics. There are no short-cuts. We are dealing with real people who want change, but with continuity and safety. They must be fully included in the process of consensus-building.

This is because structures of governance that are not developed from within will not take root. We should encourage full ownership and partnership, and the approach of international institutions and member states should take these realities into account.

In countries that have only known peace, such arguments may sound self-serving. But they are not, because lives are at stake.

The second neglected element is national identity. This is just as important.

To manage the diversity in our societies, politics must be national in scope. Whatever differences we may have, our common citizenship is a bond that unites us.



Negative experiences of nationalism have created doubt about affirming patriotism and national identity. However, what we see around the world today is that national identities are too weak, not too strong.

As a result, ethnicity, region, and religion become the dominant currency of politics, and nations are torn apart. International systems should encourage efforts by governments and civil society to strengthen national unity.

In Rwanda, we have focused on building accountable governance institutions, and renewing our dignity as a nation. As a result, Rwandans today are among the most optimistic and civic-minded people in the world.

For us, stability is not an abstraction, it is a reality that abides in the minds and hearts of the people, and the institutions they build to sustain it.

Once achieved, the horizon expands from poverty reduction, to wealth creation, and the attainment of ever higher measures of human development.

Thus, our task in the international community is not to manage conflicts, but to help prevent and end those conflicts. If we focus on keeping people safe, and bringing them together to solve their problems, we will be able to do so.