

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

It is an honour to be here standing before you today, as the Youth Representative for Rwanda.

Celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of Child in 2009 should act as a reminder for us all on just how much we have achieved thus far, but more importantly, the current challenges that stand in our way which must be addressed in order to meet the obligations we outlined for ourselves within the Convention.

Mr. Chairman,

15 years on, Rwanda still bears the burden of the effects of the 1994 genocide, which radically altered the demographic composition of the country. The repercussions are grave; a significant percentage of the population consists of women who are widows, orphans and neglected minors. The children of Rwanda are indeed living a unique experience, living in a society in which the victims of genocide must live side by side with the perpetrators and the unimaginable psychological impact associated with this experience.

In Kigali and other urban centers, the number of children living in the streets has increased. In the countryside, many familial nuclei are child headed households many of whom are forced to seek employment to provide for their siblings.

Rwanda has more than 101,000 child headed households. –with 75% of these headed by girls. These figures cannot be ignored, and must be addressed promptly.

Mr. Chairman,

In recent years, Rwanda has witnessed great transformation on an economic, social, and political level, yet numerous challenges remain. We are, however, determined to ensure that the children of Rwanda have a brighter, promising future and I am pleased to inform you that children are at the forefront of this drive and will continue to actively contribute to this process.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, it is our sincere hope that as the committee continues to consider this item we do not lose focus on the plight of the most vulnerable - our children. The experience of my country in transforming itself and re-defining its future and the future of its children offers a beacon of hope and one we must aspire to.

I thank you