

**Speech by His Excellency Paul KAGAME, President of the Republic of Rwanda at the
63rd United Nations General Assembly, September 2008**

**Mr President;
Your Majesties;
Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government;
Your Excellency Secretary General of the United Nations;
Distinguished Delegates;
Ladies and Gentlemen:**

We are gathered here once again to reflect on major national, regional and global challenges – and how together, as the United Nations, we can renew our commitment to finding solutions.

It gives me great pleasure to share with you some insights on how some of these global developments affect Rwanda as well as our region, as we continue to strengthen our social, economic and democratic institutions for improving the lives of our citizens.

Excellencies;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

In the context of fighting poverty and achieving the MDGs objectives, our second generation poverty reduction strategy is gathering momentum in Africa, East Africa and in Rwanda, in a background of greater stability, peace and improved economic performance.

In Rwanda we are registering a healthy economic growth rate, currently averaging seven percent annually, in an open and conducive environment that encourages domestic and foreign investors.

We continue to deepen our regional integration in the East African community – this is essential for a bigger and more dynamic market that should become a far more effective and efficient gateway to global markets.

With regards to empowering women and promoting their socio economic and political participation, we continue to make modest progress.

For example, in the just-concluded Rwandan Parliamentary Elections for the Lower Chamber; women candidates performed exceptionally well – increasing their percentage in the new Parliament from forty nine to fifty five.

We believe that, besides improving gender relations in our country, this marks healthy progress towards realising a vision of a united, democratic and prosperous Rwanda.

Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Allow me to raise another issue that has global implications – that of justice, and more specifically “universal jurisdiction”.

It is important that this tool is not abused by powerful nations extending their jurisdiction over weaker countries.

If unchecked, one can only imagine the legal chaos that would arise, should every judge in any country decide to apply local laws to other sovereign states.

The United Nations has a duty to ensure that universal jurisdiction serves its original goals of delivering justice and fairness – as opposed to abuse.

Excellencies;

Distinguished Delegates:

There is no doubt that one of the critical challenges of our times is climate change.

Africa is being gravely affected – deserts and dry zones continue to claim more territory.

Over-reliance on wood for energy by our populations is leading to severe deforestation.

Further, unpredictable weather and rainfall patterns combined with limited scientific and technological capacities, are already undermining our continent’s ability to effectively manage water resources.

We take these challenges very seriously in Rwanda. Earlier this month in Kigali, the Africa Climate Change Forum brought together policymakers, business leaders, academic and scientific communities from different parts of the world.

They reaffirmed that the world community urgently needs to “think global but also act locally” – in translating resolutions into actions.

Towards this end, we are determined to intensify efforts in reforestation, terracing and irrigation for more effective use of water and land resources.

It is indispensable that we partner together as a global community, to urgently act to protect our planet in the context of the Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol.

Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Rwanda is committed to regional and global peace and stability.

Let us not forget that the process of comprehensively resolving the issue of those who committed genocide in Rwanda has yet to be accomplished.

We stand ready to play our part in addressing this matter – in the context of broader objectives for consolidating stability and peace on our continent.

Once again, I assure you of our determination and commitment to creating a safer and better world.

I THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION.