

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF RWANDA TO
THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT
BY

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At the General Debate of the 60th Session of the
United Nations General Assembly

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Please check against delivery

Mr. President,

Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to begin by congratulating the President of the 59th Session, Mr. Jean Ping of Gabon, and all Member States on the successful adoption of the 2005 World Summit Outcome on Friday. The Summit Outcome document was the product of months of consultations and negotiations. We wish to pay tribute to Mr. Ping for skillfully guiding the process to its conclusion.

We also wish to congratulate you Mr. President on your election as President of the 60th Session of the General Assembly. Let me assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation in the tasks that lie ahead in this Session.

Mr. President,

By adopting the Summit Outcome document we have reaffirmed our belief in the purposes and principles of the United Nations and agreed to take appropriate and urgent steps to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We have also committed ourselves to renewing this organization, to make it more efficient, effective and transparent, so that it could be more responsive to the numerous and varied challenges and expectations of our times and indeed be able "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war"; "to maintain international peace and security,"; "to develop friendly relations among nations," and most importantly "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".

Mr. President,

We must work together in a serious and concerted manner towards realizing the MDGs and other goals outlined in the Summit Outcome document. We must create a world that is free from hunger, poverty and deprivation. We must create a world of greater economic opportunity for developing countries. We must create a world where people are free to live in dignity, a world that does not tolerate or fail to respond by protecting populations under threat of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

This is no time for business as usual. We must be urgent and focused in our action.

It is a matter of great concern to us all that if current trends persist, many African countries will not achieve most of the MDGs by 2015. Today, some African countries have actually regressed in MDG targets since 2000. Poverty, hunger and infectious diseases, lay waste to entire communities and nations and often exacerbate the effects of war and conflict, and make

the prospects for recovery infinitely more difficult. Urgent action needs to be taken to reverse these trends.

We need greater commitment from developed countries, particularly with respect to increasing ODA to 0.7% of GNP or more, freer and fairer trade and debt cancellation. This target of 0.7% of GNP as ODA was set by our August Assembly more than 40 years ago and as we speak only 5 countries have reached it. The time of speeches and debate are over. We must have action on these issues.

Mr. President,

Most of us have now come to understand the interconnectedness and interdependence of all nations around the world and the nexus between security and development. Poverty, hunger and deprivation in sub-Saharan Africa are bad for peace and security in all 191 nations represented here today. By recognizing this interdependence, we accept that there are collective responsibilities and obligations, as well as collective benefits and opportunities. The responsibilities include, in the words of the Charter, to 'promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.' We cannot have security without development, and no development without security either at the national, regional or international levels. It is both unacceptable and unsustainable for one-half of the world to live amid wealth and plenty while the other half dies from disease and hunger.

Mr. President,

Our governments are judged according to their actions, not according to ideals or principles. Similarly, the UN should be judged according to its actions not according to the values and principles laid out in the Charter. . **It is our experience that, while the United Nations is immaculate in its values and principles, it has all too often been found wanting in its actions.**

If there is any advice we can offer to the United Nations on its 60th birthday, **the advice would be that it must learn from its mistakes and be more effective in implementation.**

There are probably no other Member States in this august Assembly, apart from Rwanda, where the UN has consistently neglected to learn from its mistakes, resulting in massive loss of life and untold misery.

Allow me to explain. It was in 1959, while still under UN trusteeship, that the first acts of genocide against Tutsis took place in Rwanda, leading to the first mass refugee problem on the African continent. The UN watched unmoved and no action was ever taken. In the years following 1959, the UN stood by in silence and inaction as pogroms took place throughout the country resulting in massive loss of life and compounding the refugee crisis.

Only 35 years later, in 1994, while the United Nations had a huge political and military presence in Rwanda, it watched without action the planning and implementation of genocide. We all recall the chocking decision of the UN Security Council to withdraw peacekeepers at a

time when hundreds of thousands of defenceless people needed them most.

When genocide was totally consumed, the Security Council mandated one of its members to send troops to the country that only succeeded in allowing the perpetrators of the genocide safe passage out of Rwanda and into the Democratic Republic of Congo from where they have been the major source of insecurity and instability for the entire sub-region. Over the last 11 years, our repeated appeals to disarm and demobilize these genocidal forces have, if not fallen of deaf ears, yielded no results.

Mr. President,

I raise these examples to highlight the fact that Rwanda is probably the country most interested in the United Nations reform. We wish to take back home from this meeting to our people a message of hope and a promise that we have re-invented a United Nations that will never betray them again.

My Government welcomes the endorsement of the Responsibility to Protect in the Summit Outcome document. The Responsibility to Protect includes a responsibility to prevent Genocide, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, as well as a responsibility to prevent incitement to commit these crimes.

But here again action not words would be the measure of our success or failure. How will the United Nations respond the next time action to protect populations is required? Will there be lengthy academic or legal debates on what constitutes genocide or crimes against humanity while people die?

What is clear to us is that no nation or people should have to face the horrors that we faced 11 years ago. Where a State is unable or unwilling to protect its people, as was the case in Rwanda in 1994, then the responsibility to provide such protection should, **indeed must**, shift immediately to the international community. Such action should be taken, by the UN Security Council, in a timely and decisive manner in order to save the lives of populations under threat. Our pledge of 'never again' to genocide should not ring hollow the next time we are confronted with such crimes.

Mr. President,

A collective international response to genocide includes a responsibility for all States to combat impunity and bring to justice any persons accused of having committed such crimes. We find it inexplicable that while some States profess commitment to the Charter, human rights and international law, they allow known suspects of the Rwanda genocide to live in their countries and take no action to apprehend them and transfer them to the ICTR or Rwanda for prosecution. Those States must be challenged, if necessary by the Security Council, to fulfill their international obligations to apprehend and transfer these fugitives for prosecution.

Mr. President,

Rwanda, as a country emerging from conflict, understands better the usefulness and strongly supports the plans to establish a Peace-building Commission. We have, indeed, seen the United Nations spend hundred of millions of dollars, if not billions, on peacekeeping missions that leave behind no repaired road or bridge, or school or health centre in the countries where they have been deployed. These resources could be better spent in order to create lasting peace and stability.

We must however ensure that this Commission does not become another bureaucracy that is difficult to access and out of touch with the realities in countries emerging from conflict. It should take a long-term approach to post-conflict recovery, and change the current practice where short-term approaches to longstanding conflicts mean that we apply mere 'band-aid' solutions to highly complex situations.

The Commission should consult actively and widely with the countries affected and those countries that have successfully emerged from conflict in the recent past. It must also ensure local ownership of solutions and outcomes, so that its work can be sustainable.

Mr. President,

We believe that the Security Council should be reformed to improve its transparency and accountability. The reform process should enable States that are not members of the Council to participate more actively in its deliberative processes, especially on issues that affect them. A reformed Council should be seen by all States to be more accessible, transparent, credible and legitimate.

Security Council reform should include an enlargement of the council, so that its membership better reflects the realities of today rather than the realities of 1945. Such enlargement should, as a matter of priority, provide a fairer representation for Africa.

Mr. President,

If the United Nations is to competently fulfil the numerous and varied tasks that we assign to it then measures must be taken to improve coherence, efficiency and effectiveness within the Secretariat. Reforms should also include measures to promote transparency and accountability by strengthening oversight capacity throughout the UN system.

Mr. President,

Terrorism continues to brutally kill innocent civilians. We must all join hands to fight this evil of our times. My country will continue to lend its support to international efforts to combat against terrorism. We welcome the decision to negotiate and conclude a comprehensive convention against terrorism and my country stands ready to partake in this effort. We however believe that what is lacking is not a convention but a universally shared commitment to fight this evil. After all in 1994, we had a Convention against genocide which was 46 years old, and yet genocide occurred in my country!

Mr. President,

Turning to issues closer to home, we welcome the progress made in the peace process in Burundi. We congratulate the newly elected government and stand ready to work closely with the government and people of Burundi, and the international community to consolidate this commendable progress.

We also welcome progress being made in the Democratic Republic of the Congo where the transitional government has prepared a draft constitution and has begun the process of registering voters for elections. Progress is also being made with respect to integration of the armed forces. We welcome all these developments, recognizing that they contribute to sustainable peace and stability in the DRC and the wider region. We also stand ready to continue to support the transition process in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We believe that a stable DRC will contribute immensely to the stability of the region if not the whole continent.

We would also like to take this opportunity to renew our commitment and support for the International Conference on Great Lakes Region. My Government looks forward to the forthcoming second Heads of State summit in Nairobi in December. This summit must come up with concrete measures to deal decisively with the menace of the genocidal militia that continue to roam freely in the region and frustrate our collective peace efforts.

The role of the international community is critical. In this connection, we would like to pay special tribute to the United States government for its assistance and support that has led to the establishment of a tripartite mechanism, comprising the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda, to examine and resolve issues that could result in tensions between the three countries.

We also welcome the role of the African Union and the United Nations in advancing the prospects for sustainable peace and security in the region.

Finally Mr. President, let us, this time, build a United Nations which in addition to having "good words about life" is one which "nourishes and protects life" all over the world.

Mr. President, I thank you very much.