

7 April 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
at the 21st Commemoration of the Rwanda Genocide Memorial
Ceremony**

Delivered by H.E. Mr. Nicholas Emiliou, Permanent Representative of Cyprus on behalf of H.E. Sam Kahamba Kutesa, President of the General Assembly

H.E. Eugène-Richard Gasana, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Rwanda to the United Nations and Minister of State for Cooperation,

Excellencies,

H.E. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Distinguishes delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to join you and deliver this Statement on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency, Sam Kahamba Kutesa.

This commemoration is a solemn and important reminder, not only of the shocking events that took place in Rwanda 21 years ago, but also of our collective responsibility to ensure that such horrific crimes never take place again.

In 1994, over 800,000 men, women and children were systematically murdered in a matter of weeks. The horrors of the Rwanda genocide are unspeakable not only because of the gruesome way in which they were carried out, but also because they were preventable.

We must use the lessons learned in Rwanda to prevent such events from ever taking place again, anywhere in the world. We must learn from our failures in Rwanda; bearing in mind the dire consequences of indifference or failing to act in cases of suspected mass atrocities.

I welcome the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 2150 (2014) which called on Members States to recommit to prevent and fight against genocide and other serious crimes under the international law. Those responsible for mass killings or genocide must be held accountable for their actions in order to end impunity and ensure justice for the victims.

In this regard, the work done by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the national court system and the community courts or “Gacaca” was commendable. At the international level, greater efforts are also being made including through the International Criminal Court to prosecute individuals for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.

An increasing number of Member States and regional organizations have also created mechanisms to prevent genocide and prosecute those responsible for carrying out such crimes.

We should strive to ensure that the United Nations, and the international community takes timely and robust action to protect civilians and prevent mass murder. In this context, political commitment and sustained international support is vital.

We have, through the genocide in Rwanda and elsewhere, evidence of the depths of depravity human beings are capable of. But there are also many stories, including of those who risked and sacrificed their own lives to save others, which reaffirm our faith in humanity.

Let us use this day of remembrance as an opportunity for reflection on how to collectively ensure that such horrific events as the genocide in Rwanda never, ever happen again.

I thank you for your attention.