

*REPUBLIC OF RWANDA*



Statement by

**H.E. Ambassador Eugène-Richard GASANA**

Permanent Representative of the Republic of Rwanda to  
the United Nations

On the 17<sup>th</sup> Commemoration of the  
Rwandan Genocide against the Tutsi

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- **M. Kiyoo Akasaka, Secrétaire-Général Adjoint à la Communication et à l'Information ;**
- **Excellence Monsieur l'Ambassadeur Néstor Osorio Londoño, Représentant Permanent de la Colombie auprès des Nations Unies et Président du Conseil de Sécurité;**
- **Excellence Monsieur l'Ambassadeur Aboubacar Ibrahim Abani, Représentant Permanent du Niger auprès des Nations Unies et Président du Groupe Africain ;**
- **Excellences Mesdames et Messieurs les Représentants Permanents auprès des Nations Unies ;**
- **Mes Chers compatriotes ;**
- **Mesdames et Messieurs,**

Permettez-moi tout d'abord, au nom du Gouvernement et du peuple rwandais, d'exprimer ma profonde gratitude à vous tous pour votre présence en cette 17<sup>ème</sup> Commémoration du Génocide perpétré contre les Tutsi au Rwanda. Il aurait bien sûr été de notre préférence ne pas avoir à commémorer des jours comme celui-ci, des jours où l'on se souvient de nos morts, victimes de la main cruelle de leurs semblables. Nous ne pouvons malheureusement pas inverser les aiguilles du temps pour réparer les péchés du passé. Mais nous devons, en revanche, tirer les leçons de l'inhumanité de 1994 afin de défendre la vérité, de préserver notre dignité en se souvenant et en commémorant les vies qui ont été éteintes au cours du Génocide perpétré contre les Tutsi.

Je remercie les Nations Unies pour l'organisation annuelle de cette commémoration et pour l'invitation qui m'est faite pour m'adresser à cette auguste assemblée. Je saisis cette occasion pour réaffirmer que, malgré son histoire récente et tragique, le Rwanda a accompli de progrès substantiels vers l'avenir. Notre Gouvernement a déployé d'énormes efforts pour panser les plaies de nos compatriotes et pour mener le pays à la réconciliation, notamment grâce à l'éducation.

Malgré ces réalisations, nous devons hélas nous résoudre à toujours lutter contre le fléau du négationnisme et de la banalisation du génocide. La négation du Génocide est une atteinte intolérable à la dignité de ceux qui pleurent toujours leurs proches, puisqu'elle ajoute l'insulte à l'injure, en ravivant les blessures du passé. Mais en dépit de cette propagande inadmissible, la communauté des humains dans son ensemble reste mobilisée dans la lutte contre la déshumanisation et son objectif ultime, qui est l'extermination.

Nous avons dans notre arsenal juridique, les Conventions de Genève appelant à la "*prévention et la répression*" du Génocide. Cependant, notre amère expérience nous a mis devant cette évidence selon laquelle les lois et les discours ne suffisent pas à prévenir le génocide, à combattre leurs auteurs et à

protéger les victimes. Une vigilance constante et une action décisive sont donc nécessaires pour atteindre notre objectif commun, qui est de mettre en échec le génocide, son idéologie et sa négation, afin de préserver les générations futures.

[English]

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Only the most depraved of humanity would disagree with the right to remember the victims and the responsibility to protect targeted populations from future genocide. But how do we translate sincere sentiment into a fortress against the ever present threat of extermination? Remembering and learning from the past, educating in the present, and advocating for the future will gain results that have eluded us so far.

Therefore, armed with the lessons of the past, it is now our responsibility to shatter the great conspiracy of silence and to break down the walls of indifference and inaction — to stand against hatred and divisionism so that evil will not triumph again, despite the wisdom gained after reflecting on the systems and circumstances that lead to the loss of those whose memory we honor today.

As H.E. President Paul Kagame said, *“No country knows better than my own the costs of the international community failing to intervene to prevent a state killing its own people”*. Rwanda therefore commends the UN Security Council for its lessons learned from Rwanda and fully supports resolutions adopted to protect civilians in Libya and Côte d’Ivoire. Indeed, as it is known, indifference and inaction are never on the side of the victim but always on the side of the oppressor.

On Libya, President Kagame clearly stated that: *“Given the overriding mandate of Operation Odyssey Dawn to protect Libyan civilians from state-sponsored attacks, Rwanda can only stand in support of it. Our responsibility to protect is unquestionable — this is the right thing to do, and this view is backed with the authority of having witnessed and suffered the terrible consequences of international inaction”*.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Perhaps the most important lesson from the Genocide is that remembrance includes the responsibility to educate. Learning lessons from the past is part of the common legacy of those targeted for extermination. This lesson has particular significance because the theme selected by the UN for this year’s commemoration is *“Rebuilding Rwanda: Reconciliation and Education”*. It is

worthwhile to explore briefly how this theme might be transformed into action in the coming weeks and months of 2011 as a way to reinforce the official theme of the Government of Rwanda, which is "*Commemorating the Genocide against the Tutsi by upholding the truth and preserving our dignity*".

Education is a weapon for confirming the truth of what perpetrators did and for standing up for the rights of survivors to exist and belong. Education can help to restore and preserve the dignity of those targeted for extermination. The responsibility to educate, to prevent and protect falls to the bystanders who are not implicated in conflicts but whose inattention, indifference, and inaction give space for tolerance and acceptance of genocide ideology that, left unchecked, will result in the deadly practices that international legal conventions, UN resolutions, special advisors and all people of good intentions pledged never to let happen again.

In this regard, I express my profound gratitude to the Outreach Program on the Rwandan Genocide and the United Nations for their efforts in reaching out young generations on the Rwandan genocide, and most particularly by publicizing the cartoon "*Tugire Ubumwe*" (Let's Unite), written by my compatriot Rupert Bazambanza. There could be no better educational material for future generations.

### **Ladies and gentlemen,**

Although I have focused on lessons learned and actions yet to be taken in response, I do not want to omit the support that Rwanda and her genocide survivors have already received from the international community and from the United Nations System. Indeed, various UN departments and agencies have come to the aid and comfort of the survivors since 1994. The General Assembly has adopted resolutions recognizing the victims, promoting genocide education and outreach, and calling for medical and psychological support to vulnerable survivors.

I thank the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon for his tireless efforts for genocide prevention, including by appointing a Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide and a Special Adviser for the Responsibility to Protect. He has boldly advocated giving real meaning to the responsibility to protect concept by taking steps to make it operational.

In closing, let me also remind you of "*The Legacy of Holocaust Survivors and the Pledge of Acceptance of the Second Generation,*" that was written in Yiddish by Elie Wiesel:

*“We remember — and we pledge — and this must not be a matter of rhetoric but must be a commitment to action — that never again will we be indifferent to incitement and hate; that never again will we be silent in the face of evil; that never again will we indulge racism and anti-semitism; that never again will we ignore the plight of the vulnerable; that never again will we be indifferent in the face of mass atrocity and impunity”.*

We will speak and we will act against racism, against hate, against anti-semitism, against mass atrocity, against injustice — and against the crime of crimes whose name we should even shudder to mention — genocide.”

Ladies and gentlemen, you too can pledge to make this day not only an act of remembrance, but let it be a remembrance to act!

I thank you for your kind attention.