

**MESSAGE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF REFLECTION ON
THE 1994 GENOCIDE AGAINST THE TUTSI IN RWANDA**

7 April 2024

Your Excellency, Dr. Monique Nsanzabaganwa, the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission,

Your Excellency, Ambassador Mesganu Arga Moach, State Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, representing the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,

Your Excellency, Jainaba Jagne, Ambassador Permanent Representative of the Gambia to the African Union, and Chairperson of the AUPSC for the month of April,

Your Excellency, Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union Commission,

Your Excellency, Major General Charles Karamba, Ambassador of Rwanda to Ethiopia and Permanent Representative of Rwanda to the African Union Commission and ECA,

Your Excellency, Claver Gatete, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa,

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives present,

Religious Leaders, Youth Representatives,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we gather here today at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, it is with solemn reverence that we reflect on the tragic events of those dark days.

We stand together united to remember and honour the memory of the more than one million lives lost, to show our solidarity with the survivors, and to renew our commitment to ensuring that such atrocities never happen again.

Please allow me to start by sharing the message of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and I quote:

Message from the Secretary-General:

On this day in 1994, and for the nearly 100 days that followed, one million Tutsi children, women and men were killed by their fellow Rwandans.

Families turned against families, friends became foes, and a dark spirit of intentional and brutal violence engulfed a nation.

We will never forget the victims of this genocide. Nor will we ever forget the bravery and resilience of those who survived, whose courage and willingness to forgive remain a burst of light and hope amidst this dark chapter in human history.

This year, we remind ourselves of genocide's rancid root: hate.

We can draw a straight line between the senseless slaughter of one million Tutsi — as well as some Hutu and others who opposed the genocide — and the decades of hate speech that preceded it, enflamed by ethnic tensions and the long shadow of colonialism.

Today, around the world, the darkest impulses of humanity are being awakened once more by the voices of extremism, division and hate.

To those who would seek to divide us, we must deliver a clear, unequivocal and urgent message: never again.

On this solemn day of remembrance, let's pledge to stand as one against all forms of hatred and discrimination.

Let's ensure that the acts that began on April 7, 1994 are never forgotten — and never repeated. Anywhere. End of quote.

[SRSG Personal remarks]

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In addition to these profound words from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, please allow me to add some few remarks.

What happened in Rwanda in 1994, and the years that preceded it, were indeed among the darkest chapters of the 20th Century.

The international community failed the Rwandan people. Warning signs of impending genocide were ignored, including hate speech, incitement, and the mobilization of militia, and as a result over one million children, women and men faced brutal deaths, in what has been correctly described as a preventable genocide.

The theme of this commemoration, "Remember-Unite-Renew," encapsulates the essence of our collective endeavour. It is a call to action, for all of us.

Yes, let's heed the DCP's call to "Celebrate the triumph of humanity over Evil".

This is a cry from the heart, towards one goal: to ensure that the genocide that took place in 1994 in Rwanda does not happen, ever again. How can we achieve this?

Firstly, let us remember the horrors of genocide, fight denial and revisionism, and give a voice to the survivors. We must stand in solidarity and draw inspiration from their courage and resilience.

Secondly, we know from the tragic experience of the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, that mass atrocity crimes do not take place in a vacuum.

On the contrary, these crimes are always preceded by numerous warning signs. We must be alert to such signs, and act quickly to avert them.

We need to ensure that the tools and mechanisms at our disposal are active and can work with the Policy Organs of our organizations to take timely and decisive actions, and not be undermined by political interests and expediency.

In this regard, we recall that the principle of the “Responsibility to Protect”, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly at the 2005 World Summit, recognizes that the first responsibility is to prevent or avert mass atrocity crimes from occurring in the first place. Allow me to seize this opportunity to welcome the appointment of Mr. Adama Dieng. There certainly can't be a better person to move this critical piece of work forward.

In addition to the responsibility to prevent and to protect, governments and the international community also have a ***responsibility to rebuild***.

This responsibility requires us to join hands with communities emerging from conflict to ensure that the root causes are addressed sustainably, and political processes are well supported to prevent relapse.

Peace processes must take into consideration the whole spectrum of issues that lead to genocide, conflict, or violence in the first place.

The politics of hate, marginalization, intolerance, and discrimination must be addressed, including rebuilding national peace infrastructures which promote national dialogue and the mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of disputes.

Thirdly, let us renew our commitment to justice and the fight against impunity. The trials conducted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the Rwandan Judiciary, and the Gacaca Courts were all necessary steps towards ensuring accountability for perpetrators, justice for the victims, and a more conducive environment for peace and reconciliation for the nation.

We commend the institutions involved for their efforts which are key components of post-genocide renewal.

Prevention of genocide and combating the ideology of genocide requires a global commitment from all of us: the United Nations, the African Union, Member States, civil societies – all human beings.

In conclusion, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let us honour the memory of the victims of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, by renewing our collective resolve to prevent genocide and other forms of mass atrocities across the world. Let us resolve to "Remember-Unite-Renew" in this noble duty.

Let us stand united in our commitment to build a more compassionate, and more just world where human rights, particularly the right to life, are respected, and where peace prevails.

I thank you.