

Reconciliation and Reconstruction in Rwanda

**Remarks by His Excellency Paul KAGAME,
President of the Republic of Rwanda,
at the United Nations University**

8 November, 2006
Tokyo, Japan

PROFESSOR HANS VAN GINKEL, RECTOR, UNITED NATIONS
UNIVERSITY;
EXCELLENCIES;
DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN;

I have distinct pleasure to be here today at the United Nations University to participate in a discussion on Rwanda's progress in reconciling and rebuilding our country in the last twelve years.

I will in my remarks highlight our modest achievements in three main fields, namely, political and institutional development, reconciliation, and socioeconomic reconstruction. I will also comment on our achievements in regional, continental and international relations.

EXCELLENCIES

Let me begin by highlighting the fact that in much of Rwanda's post-independence history, our country has had bad leadership. The state and the political class that controlled it divided Rwandans and consistently sought to eliminate a section of our society. This is what accounts for periodic massacres and the exiling of hundreds of thousands of Rwandans since the 1950s up to the 1994 genocide.

Mindful of this legacy, our primary reconstruction objective since 1994 has been to attempt to change the character of Rwandan politics. Our accomplishments in this regard include the fact that sectarian ideologies that denied citizenship and human rights to Rwandans have been replaced by inclusive politics in which no Rwandans are denied their rights. The Government of National Unity that led Rwanda through the transitional period between 1994 and 2003 was informed by this perspective. All Rwandan political parties were part of this government.

Rwanda's Constitution entrenches this principle of power-sharing and consensus building in our society. A winning party in national elections may not, for instance, have more than 50% ministers in the national cabinet. The head of state and the speaker in parliament may not come from the same party.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

With regard to reconciliation, we may briefly highlight three key programs. A specific institution, namely the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission was established to solicit views from Rwandans on how to reverse the effects of the politics of hate. The Commission has a year round program that reviews the extent to which reconciliation efforts are integrated into national policies and their impact.

Rwanda's decentralisation programs have also contributed to reconciliation by bringing government closer to communities that elect it. Local communities have begun to actively participate in decision-making processes on a broad range of developmental

matters that affect their lives. This further builds a culture of dialogue particularly on such issues as leadership, topics that were previously unthinkable at this level. Another contributing exercise to the Rwandan reconciliation process is what we call in Rwanda the GACACA court jurisdiction. GACACA on the one hand aims at reducing the heavy workload of conventional courts while on the other hand it constitutes an instrument for reconciliation. By bringing genocide suspects to a community-based court system, the accuser and the accused face one another in their communities, while the community acts as the jury of peers.

The combination of the above mechanisms has made a significant contribution to the rebuilding Rwanda's social fabric, bond and trust.

On the economic front, we are currently growing at an annual rate of 6% due to among other things our macroeconomic stability, low inflation and considerable investment. But we can still do better in this regard. Towards this goal we have our Vision 2020, which came about through a consultative exercise.

Vision 2020 centres on several imperatives including transformation of agriculture into a productive, high value, market oriented sector. Fostering an entrepreneurial business sector as well as undertaking comprehensive human resources development encompassing science and technology is a priority in our vision. So is infrastructural development, entailing improved regional transport links in light of Rwanda's land-locked status. Achieving greater regional integration for enhanced trade and investment is fundamental to the realisation of our development agenda.

EXCELLENCIES

Let me now address our progress at building our external relations. You will recall that over two million Rwandan refugees went into exile in the Great Lakes Region at the height of genocide. Most of the refugees returned home except for the remnants of the genocidal regime that continued to destabilise Rwanda. This problem is gradually being resolved. The Great Lakes Region is also increasingly stable. Furthermore, Rwanda plays an active role in supporting regional peace initiatives, including the East African Standby Force in the African Union framework.

At the continental level, let me emphasise firstly that Africa is in transition. Electoral processes have steadily replaced conflicts in most parts of our continent. Institutionally, the ineffective Organisation of the African Unity has been replaced by the African Union which upholds democratic and human rights values. The New Partnership for Africa's Development and its Peer Review Mechanism subjects African countries to peer assessments and provides advice on public and corporate governance matters. Rwanda was among the first African countries to be subjected to the peer review mechanism.

It is important to note that Rwanda is an active participant in the African Union's initiatives. For example we directly support its peace keeping efforts in Darfur, and

those of the United Nations in the rest of that country in the framework of the peace agreement between the south and the government of Sudan. We have also contributed to peace-building efforts in Liberia and the Comoros.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

In the international arena, we work well with both bilateral and multilateral institutions, including the United Nations system. True enough, the international community did not act adequately during the Rwandan genocide, and one hopes we all learnt our lessons so that potential occurrences of that scale and magnitude of impunity are prevented.

We appreciate the creation of the UN's International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda set up to try genocide-related crimes. Disappointingly, however, the Tribunal has only tried a small number of genocide suspects at an enormous cost. Dialogue aimed achieving better results between the Tribunal and Rwanda continue.

EXCELLENCIES

I will dwell, for the result of my remarks on Rwanda's and indeed Africa's prospects at socioeconomic transformation. Africa is an increasingly peaceful and stable continent. This environment enables us to design and implement policies for creating greater wealth through trade, investment and the associated productive capacities, which in my view is the real pathway to defeating poverty. Put differently, the peace and stability dividends should enable our continent to tackle its developmental challenges.

At the international level, there is greater understanding of the need for national ownership of policymaking as opposed to imposition of generic policy "blue prints" by international agencies. There is also greater appreciation of the scale and quality of external support our continent needs. Towards that end, there is commitment by G8 to scale up development assistance to Africa in the context of especially the Millennium Development Goals.

From the above, it becomes clear that there is overall an improved environment in which we in Rwanda and Africa should concentrate on the business of improving lives. In Rwanda we should not just maintain the pace of our transformation process of the past decade but double it with focussed and consistent implementation strategies. And as in the recent past, we could not have achieved our goals without partnerships with our international friends, including Japan. These relationships are vital for effective results.

I THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION