

Statement by the ACP Secretary General on the occasion of the 21st commemoration of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, 7 April 2015, Brussels

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[Protocols]

First of all, on behalf of the ACP Group, allow me to thank you for the honour of having invited me to address you on this momentous occasion.

We are gathered here today to observe the 21st anniversary of the 1994 tragic Genocide. This has been a custom for us since May 2004 when, in response to this tragedy, the Group of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, meeting at Ministerial level in May 2004 in Gaborone, Botswana, undertook the solemn commitment to never forget one of the most heinous crimes against humanity. In doing so, the ACP Group is firmly resolved to devote all its energies to combating such deficiencies and tragedy that can lead to situations where human beings - for no understandable or logical reason – seeks to annihilate his fellow person.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today is a day for us to reflect and ponder very deeply the sad events of 21 years ago.

That day when the world witnessed the worst demonstration of the type of atrocities which, when driven by intolerance and sheer folly, human beings are capable of inflicting on each other awful brutality. In the wake of that tragedy, the entire world came together to unequivocally state in one voice: NEVER AGAIN! We must therefore remain vigilant to ensure that this kind of tragedy is not repeated.

As we commemorate this day, we stand united against oppression, injustice and inhumanity perpetrated against groups of people, as well as individuals, anywhere in the world. We remind ourselves that it was failure to speak out and stand up for the victims of the genocide that led to the killing of nearly a million people over a period of three months while the international community stood by - the same international community that remains divided on the designation of “genocide against the Tutsi” or the “genocide against Rwanda”. May I confirm to you Mr. Ambassador that we are taking due note of the request [from the Embassy regarding the wording] and we are pursuing it. We must remain forever vigilant, therefore, to ensure that this kind of tragedy does not occur again anywhere in the world. We must remember that all it takes for evil to triumph is for good people to say nothing and do nothing.

In my capacity as Secretary-General of the ACP Group, I would like to seize the opportunity of this 21st commemoration to yet again pay a sincere and poignant tribute to the victims of this heinous act, as well as to the men and women who still feel, in their souls and their bodies, the scars from these tragic events. I welcome the courage of a people who, despite the deep trauma that may still be perceived today, are standing proudly and more determined than ever to be reconciled with themselves, to rebuild a society free of the pain of the past and confident in the future. Mr. Ambassador, in particular, we deeply admire here in Brussels the efforts that you have made in this regard.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today, I am surrounded by many Rwandan men and women. Despite the gravity of this event, I see serene and pleasant faces. Yet, I doubt that I am mistaken in saying that every Rwandan man or woman present may have lost at least one loved-one during the dreadful events of 1994. This serenity does not mean that the memory is gone; it means that Rwandans, and all of us along with you, are determined to rid ourselves of our anguish and to work towards building a more harmonious and equal society. When the soul is at peace, hope is renewed and hope feeds into the miracle!

The economic and social miracle of a new Rwanda!

I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to congratulate the Government and people of Rwanda for the courage and resilience that they have demonstrated in rising from the depths of adversity to rebuild and rehabilitate their country socially, politically and economically, as well as to mend the deep ethnic-based differences that were manipulated, with devastating effect, by the perpetrators of the genocide. Justice should prevail and must prevail. Today, no one who visits Rwanda fails to be impressed by the prevailing peace, stability and harmony. These are the conditions for long-term sustainable development that have been so carefully nurtured by President Kagame and his government.

The tremendous achievements made in the social, political and economic fields have given the ACP Group hope and indeed led to the conviction that Rwanda's society has now firmly embarked on the path to peace, serenity, and the consolidation of unity and national reconstruction.

This does not mean, however, that we can let down our guard and relax our struggle to eradicate any phenomenon that could stoke the fires of an eventual return to hatred and intolerance.

NEVER AGAIN, we must all say and repeat it - NEVER AGAIN! For this to become a reality, we must resolutely attack the root causes of the genocide, namely hatred, intolerance, racism, xenophobia, fundamentalism and tyranny, as well as poverty and exclusion. I call on all our member States, therefore, to remain mobilised and to strengthen cooperation so as to meet the challenges and eradicate these scourges that can serve as weapons of mass destruction.

In the face of the persistent tendency towards denial and the potential danger of repeated atrocities, I strongly urge the ACP States and the entire international community to adopt legal instruments to condemn and remove any denials which can amount to perpetuating the genocide.

Through me, the staff members of the ACP Secretariat, the ACP Committee of Ambassadors and the entire ACP Group reaffirm their compassion, their solidarity and their support for the Government and people of Rwanda.

I invite everyone here, in communion with our Rwandan brothers and sisters here and everywhere, to pray for the restoration of lasting peace to the Land of a Thousand Hills and to learn the relevant lessons from this human tragedy in order to ensure that history does not repeat itself.

Long live the new and united Rwanda!
I thank you very much.

Dr. Patrick I. Gomes
Secretary General

(Photo: ACP Secretary General and Ambassador of Rwanda to the EU, H.E Mr. Robert Masozera during the commemoration ceremony of the 1994 genocide, held at the ACP House in Brussels on 7 April 2015)

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