

Statement by H.E. Patrick I. Gomes, Secretary-General of the ACP Group of States on the occasion of the 25th Commemoration of the Rwandan Genocide against the Tutsi.

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His Excellency, Kaire Mbuende Ambassador of the Republic of Namibia and Chairman of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors,

His Excellency, Mr. Amadin Rugira Ambassador of the Republic of Rwanda,

Distinguished Invited Guests and Friends,

Dear Sisters and Brothers from Rwanda,

Allow me from the onset, on behalf of the ACP Group, to welcome each of you to the ACP House and to express my sincere appreciation for the strong sense of support and solidarity manifested in your attendance and participation in this event in spite of your many priorities and busy schedules.

It is indeed a privilege to address you on this occasion. Today we mark the 25th anniversary of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide against the Tutsi. And as customary for the ACP Group in the last 15 years, we have made this commemoration a key event in our calendar.

Today our thoughts are with the victims of this atrocious tragedy and our prayers with the survivors who are true heroes as they continue to inspire us with their strength, resilience and determination.

Over the last four years that this commemoration has taken place during my term as the Secretary General of the ACP Group two messages remain paramount.

First, never forget.

Second, never stop working to prevent another genocide.

Your Excellency

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Preventing genocide is a collective and individual responsibility. Everyone has a role to play: Governments, the media, civil society organizations, religious groups, diaspora and each and every one of us. Genocide committed anywhere in the world should be viewed as a failure of the international community as a whole, and the prevention of it is the duty of each of us individually and the humankind collectively. I am confident that the acknowledgement of this very fact is what has gathered us here today.

Let us this evening purpose to build a global partnership against genocide. Let us commit at this 25th Anniversary to ensure a future that is free of genocide. This would be the most fitting way to remember those lost in Rwanda 25 years ago, and to honour the resilience of the survivors.

I have had the incredible honor of receiving in the ACP House some of those survivors like Claire Ruyuki who despite the loss of all her family members delivers a strong and powerful message of hope and forgiveness everywhere she goes.

Last year I also had the privilege of meeting Felicite Lyamukuru another survivor that has vowed to ensure genocide does not have a place in today's world and in the future generations. She has documented her journey and this information is now shared in schools and in youth forums.

And today we will hear from another hero amongst us Ms Justine Mudahogora we welcome you to the ACP House.

The spirit of resilience and determination by Rwandese is commendable. They have continued to make good progress because of their courage and the strength that is always displayed out of patriotism and striving for unity and a form of governance that seeks to foster the interests of all citizens.

Your Excellency

Ladies and Gentlemen

I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to commend the Government and people of Rwanda for the courage and resilience that they have demonstrated in rising from the depths of adversity to rebuilding and rehabilitating their country socially, politically and economically, as well as mending the deep ethnic-based differences that were manipulated, with devastating effect, by the perpetrators of genocide.

Today, no one visits Rwanda and fails to be impressed by the peace, stability and harmony, which are the conditions for long-term sustainable inclusive development that has been enabled by the leadership and people of your beautiful country. These achievements give the ACP Group hope that indeed a country can fully embark on the path to peace, serenity, consolidation of unity and national reconstruction.

I am deeply moved by some of the reflections of this dark day in our history. I am reminded of twenty-five years ago, thousands of Rwandese found refuge in a National Stadium, barely escaping the murder that stalked Kigali and the countryside.

Today that very stadium is place that is filled with people who are building a new Rwanda, a Rwanda of shared culture, traditions and peace. Let the significance of the name of this stadium Amahoro, or peace – forever be our goal and guide.

Rwanda has now become a point of reference for advocating for peace for other nations, by being one of the providers of peace keepers for both UN and African Union.

On the 31 March 2019, just under two weeks ago, at the Peacekeeping Ministerial meeting held at the UN Headquarters, Rwanda announced specific pledges of peace keeping capabilities to strengthen those operations. Rwanda pledged an infantry battalion to be on rapid deployment level as a standby for the period 2019-2020.

Rwanda has now become a country of great inspiration and it remains my hope that all States will remain vigilant and determined to learn from Rwanda and strengthen cooperation to fight against genocide.

Your Excellency

Ladies and Gentlemen

Brothers and Sisters,

The ACP Group has a moral duty to act on the lessons of Rwanda and therefore reaffirms its commitment to support Countries to ensure peaceful environments for rule of law and good governance as enshrined in the Cotonou Agreement.

At the global level, nations have committed to addressing Genocide through the Principle of Responsibility to Protect (R2P). This global political commitment has been endorsed by all member states in order to address its four key concerns prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and all crimes against humanity. Our daily challenge is therefore to give real meaning to this global commitment, by taking all necessary steps to make it operational and become a living reality at national, regional and international level. Only then will it truly give hope to those facing genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.

The ACP Secretariat and I reaffirm our compassion, our solidarity and our support for the Government and people of Rwanda. As we commemorate this day, let's really not forget the greater lessons from Rwanda of reconciliation, generosity, kindness and understanding that are essential for nations to overcome hate. Let's resolve today to nature these values that will provide a life of dignity and security for all.

As I conclude, our theme of today says Remember, Unite, Renew Let our Memory be accompanied with consciousness of humanity, our unity be unwaivering and our hearts renewed each day to the spirit behind Never Again!

Murakoze cyane.
[Thank you very much.]”

I thank you all for your kind attention

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