

20TH Commemoration of the 1994 Rwanda Genocide

10th April 2014

ICTR/MICT

Remarks by Mr. Danford Mpumilwa on Behalf of the ICTR Staff Association

Your Excellences

Invited Guests

Fellow Staff Members

Ladies and Gentlemen

I stand before you to say a few words on this day that we mark the 20th Commemoration of the 1994 Rwanda Genocide. Unfortunately the President of the ICTR Staff Association Mr. Abdulkadir Ali Sheikh could not make it today as he is away on mission. However he sends his greetings to you all. On behalf of the staff of the ICTR, we wish to pay our respects and remember the many victims of the genocide, and also remember the important lessons this tragedy has to teach all humanity for all time.

Twenty years ago the United Nations Security Council in New York decided to assemble a dedicated group of individuals from several member states to come to Arusha and physically establish the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. The group composed of investigators, lawyers, administrators, security officers, management experts, drivers and engineers, among others, began small but in due course grew to almost 1,500 members of staff from about 100 different countries.

The group was assembled after the world witnessed one of the worst humanitarian tragedies of our times - the genocide of 1994 in Rwanda. It was tasked by the Council with some challenging tasks which would propel the promotion of international criminal justice to new unprecedented levels. The core objectives of this Tribunal were threefold; To bring to justice those who bear responsibility for the crimes committed in Rwanda during this period; to contribute to ensuring that such violations are halted and effectively redressed; and to contribute to the process of national reconciliation and to the restoration and maintenance of peace in the country.

Indeed the 1994 genocide in Rwanda was a tragic testimony to how low mankind had reached in matters pertaining to human rights and international criminal justice. However the collective conscience of mankind, through the United Nations, decided to address this grave development by establishing the ICTR.

We, staff at the ICTR, remain committed to that mandate and renew our resolve to ensure the accountability of those responsible for this tragedy. As we look back at the challenges encountered and achievements registered we realize that indeed mankind has come a long way in addressing this matter.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today our hearts reach out to the souls of those who perished and to the survivors who lost all that it meant to be human; survivors whose tales of resilience and perseverance in the face of adversity are a true inspiration for all of us as they are rebuilding their shattered lives and lifting their great Nation of Rwanda from the ashes of Genocide.

April 7th must forever be remembered in mankind's history. For with remembrance, with regret, with remorse, we may truly begin to give concrete meaning to our commitment "never again." As we commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Rwanda Genocide, no memory evokes as much horror and revulsion as does the memory of the tremendous systematic and widespread mass killings of more than 800,000 people who were killed on account of their blood, birth and political affiliations in those fateful 100 days in the spring of 1994. On an occasion such as this our thoughts must go to the victims and to the survivors.

We pay our deepest respects to them. We pay tribute to the countless survivors who daily carry the heavy burden of pain and suffering of their experience with them; survivors who despite this burden have in many ways greatly assisted the process of legal justice here, and elsewhere, to take its course.

ICTR's experience of the Rwanda genocide should spur us all to a more broad based response to such actual potential tragedies.

Ladies and Gentlemen

We, the Staff of the ICTR, wish to point out that addressing the plight of victim survivors in the event of future preventive action should be an important component of delivering justice to post conflict situations. If there is a costlier lesson we as part of the International Community have learnt from this genocidal events, it is that the costs of inaction, from human, material and

historical viewpoints, far outstrip those of untimely and costly intervention and delayed prevention.

We must keep alive the memory of those victims, who lost their lives and those victims who have been deeply affected psychologically and physically.

Keeping the memory of the Rwanda Genocide alive is the only way for all of us to maintain the candle light of hope burning so that the “never again concept” can find a true meaning in our collective action and for genocide to never again happen anywhere else in this world.

Ladies and Gentlemen

In conclusion allow me to point out that we, as Staff Members of this noble institution say; we are proud to have been involved in this noble task, as mandated so by the United Nations, in participating in these tasks which make the world a better place for us and for our future generations even as we remember the past and pay the humblest respects to those who have passed so tragically.

Thank you very much.