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REPUBLIC OF RWANDA

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
OFFICIAL VERSION

SPEECH DELIVERED IN KIGALI ON 17 AUGUST 1992 BY THE PRESIDENT OF  
THE REPUBLIC ON THE OCCASION OF THE SWEARING -IN CEREMONY OF  
NEW DEPUTIES TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly,  
Your Excellency the Prime Minister,  
Honourable Deputies,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Fellow Rwandans,

I would like take the opportunity of the official swearing-in ceremony of new deputies to the National Assembly to talk about two issues which are of major concern to our country: the internal political situation on the one hand and negotiations with the organization that attacked Rwanda (the RPF), on the other.

However, I would like to start by congratulating the new deputies for the confidence reposed in them by the general public. In any democratic society, the National Assembly embodies the very essence of democracy. It is the legislative arm which helps the democratic tool function *par excellence* and is the voice of the people, thus, the expression of the will of the people.

Also, the Parliament is responsible for follow-up of Government action and for verifying if it is well-founded, relevant and meets the expectations of the people. In other words the Parliament is responsible for assessing Government action because, according to Title III, Chapter II of the Constitution, the Parliament, that is, the National Assembly, is responsible for controlling Government action and informing the public of its findings.

Government action is, first and foremost, assessed in relation to the internal political situation. Is that not the primary task and a response to the aspiration of the people that want the Government ensures that peace and harmony reigns among the people, that basic needs, including security and respect of the person, are met.

The Government, made up of members of the five political parties which constitute the nucleus of the multiparty political scene of our country, raised a lot of hope with respect to restoration of peace among the people, strengthening of unity and national cohesion, finding of solutions to be proposed to the people owing to the benefits of the coalition in order to resolve some serious issues on the front burner, particularly the restoration of peace at the borders, the easing of internal tension, economic recovery, the scheduling of

elections and the ending of the transition period. Those are the main Government priorities agreed upon by consensus.

The Government in question has just spent a little over 100 days in office. Governments are usually given 100 days after which an assessment of their performance is made. It is believed that the Government requires that much time to lay the foundation for the implementation of its programme, for the new society it intends to build.

Now that the 100 days have elapsed, what can be said about the actions of the Government?

Honourable Deputies,  
Fellow Rwandans,

In my opinion, it is clear that the Government has many achievements to its credit. I congratulate myself and I must not fail to congratulate the Government as well for these achievements.

Among the achievements there is, first and foremost, ... the fact that the Government still exists and endeavours to function, to resolve problems which arise daily. It has not been easy but our hope was unlimited.

Yes, there are problems, but we all do our best to encourage the Government in its work to restore peace and harmony in our country. The Government must remain assured of the support of all Rwandans and must continue to prove that it deserves this trust!

As I was saying, on 2 April 1992, on the occasion of the appointment of the new Prime Minister, the transition period which must, without fail, be characterized by the putting in place of an open Government was, for me, a response to the belief that our people constitute an entity for whom harmony and understanding should always prevail over disharmony and quarrel; that when faced with challenges threatening the very existence of the Rwandan society, national cohesion will rise to new levels especially as collective interest is the supreme motivation.

In addition to surviving, and operating for four months, the transition Government also endeavoured to strengthen the credibility of the nation by doing all within its power to normalize relations with Rwanda's neighbours, relations which were put to test by general anxiety, exacerbation of tension and other issues, no matter how justified. Having transcended the splits in this domain, the Government left no stone unturned to restore mutual confidence: and that is not the least of its achievements.

Other positive actions to its credit include the successful completion of a number of planned or on-going matters or the acceleration of reforms already initiated, as well as the continued mobilization of Rwanda's donors whose intervention at this difficult time has acquired a new facet.

Honourable Deputies,  
Fellow Rwandans,

24127

Obviously, it would be unrealistic to think that everything would be perfect, that total confidence would prevail without a hitch, that common partisan interests would give way to common interest.

This explains why, as man is what he is, and society is no different, the transition Government in place experienced all kinds of tension, bribery and corruption, hasty interpretations, attempts to short circuit the regular procedure in order to sometimes make partisan interests dominate. How could it have been otherwise?

I am convinced that the situation could not have been any different and as the person in charge of ensuring the regular operation of the higher level institutions of the Republic, all I saw was a learning process, albeit difficult, with respect to the functioning of a coalition Government. My approach, in conformity with the line of conduct which I adopted, was to have the attitude of an observer, conciliator and encourager. Therefore, my bi-weekly meetings with the Prime Minister were privileged moments to reduce tension, increase mutual confidence, make issues progress, encourage every one to discharge their duties, bank on goodwill and experience acquired over time.

As multiparty promises had been accepted, and, that is indeed the desire of Rwandans, then one must play the game, one must keep one's head above water and ensure that the boat is being steered in the right direction even if the waves, wind, the storm due to the forces of nature create unavoidable jolts, one must ensure that the boat does not capsize.

Honourable Deputies,  
Fellow Rwandans,

Until now, the boat has not capsized. It has not sunk, but there are risks that it could, and unfortunately, today, they are more real than ever and care must be taken.

It is my duty to draw your attention to this, to draw your attention to the risks which exist today with respect to the running of the country and to ensure that measures are taken to prevent our boat, that is our country and that of our children, our native land from sinking into throes of a misunderstood multiparty politics.

Indeed, the dangers, such as we face now, are evident.

They can be identified at three levels: First, within the Government.

Regrettably, it has been noticed that the discipline and discretion which should characterize the activities of the cabinet, Government solidarity with respect to decisions to be taken and/or taken, consultation, consensus which should characterize decisions taken are in a shambles, on the one hand, because of intrigues and scheming and, on the other, as a result of failure to comply with the rules of the game as defined in the

24126

agreement signed between the parties which make up the Government, due to totally disregard for constitutional constraints, rules and provisions.

I can well understand that the current exhilaration, excitement, desire to excel may lead us to forget the rules and procedures of a noble and credible country and Government.

I can well understand that the stakes may be such that sometimes they are not well grasped and understood and that their various and complex implications may be beyond the control of Government actors.

I can well understand that to err is human, and it would be unnecessary to cast a stone every time a mistake is made, to stigmatize every action done in good faith for it is possible that results may exceed expectations.

I can well understand that this could be normal and, to a certain extent, I would like to insist that all this be accepted as norm in a wider sense. However, it is when there is accumulation, repetition, when there is a trend to systemize, then responsibility becomes collective and we reach a stage where we can no longer accept the situation.

At the moment, in my capacity as President of the Republic, I have noticed that the management of Government action may be beyond the reach of its leaders if they do not adopt appropriate measures.

It is my duty, to the people of Rwanda, and, as provided for in the constitution, to ensure that the responsibility of managing Government action is assumed in conformity with constitutional regulations as well as for the benefit of our people.

For if a Government has lost its credibility or is currently losing it, this should be taken seriously for it is a portent of serious trouble.

Therefore, I would like to recall that there are rules which require that administration be as independent as possible of the political power in place for, above all, it is important that it benefits collective interests, be neutral towards political parties, be independent and be guided in its analysis by national interests.

Thus, it would be harmful to the Government, cause offence to its leaders, discredit the civil service if the idea were to gain ground or were strengthened as could be deduced from some proposals according to which people who do not pledge allegiance to such and such a party of which the minister is a member will lose their positions in projects or administration or that membership of a party will take *ipso facto* precedence over professional and moral qualifications.

Public administration could be seen as the visiting card of a nation. It should remain above suspicion, inaccessible to attacks, incorruptible, efficient. It is in the interest of each party, desirous to contribute to the progress of the country. Thus the few positive

24125

decisions taken by the Government in that regard must not be overshadowed, annihilated and result in an overall negative assessment.

For my part, I have given the necessary guidelines in order to prevent the public administration from becoming gangrenous.

I am therefore calling on the Prime Minister and the entire Government to do all in their power to ensure that they draw more inspiration from these guidelines and ethic and prove that they are working solely in the interest of the country. If, as advocated by the Government programme, the right thing is to strengthen stability and efficiency in administration to which all parties have subscribed then the contrary should not be the case.

By drawing more inspiration from the spirit of the Government programme and devoting more respect to compliance with constitutional provisions, it would be possible to eliminate the first type of danger which I envisage so we may remain on course, and steer our country to a bright future. What we want to do is ensure multiparty politics succeed. In that regard and comforted by our common desire to work hand in hand, we would be proud of each other for having made our experience in multiparty politics a real success for which Rwandan generations to come would thank us.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Honourable Deputies,

The second danger which may threaten our achievements and sink our ship and which can never be overstated are the practice and trends by members of some political parties which consist of replacing a public figure, to play the role of the State and its institutions, by placing themselves above the law, above the desires of the people, in total disregard for the least democratic rule.

Terrorize the rural population, persecute the farmer our main produce provider responsible for our survival and our food, sow panic in *communes*, incite the people to racial hatred, fight the local authorities, blackmail them using physical threats so they may abandon their positions - these are the worst excesses regarding such practices.

What is particularly serious, what is inadmissible, what is incomprehensible is that many high ranking officials seem to derive pleasure therefrom and would do anything to make feelings run high, incite their members to violence so that people may get the notion of trouble in the heads, and disturbances will ensue with the hope of creating destruction, anarchy which, though criminal and condemnable, I imagine benefits them. The least that can be said is to describe this action as cowardice and a serious disrespect for professional ethics which should govern the conduct of all politicians and as disrespect for the voter himself, equally bad, for he is considered unimportant.

24124

If not, how else would you explain these shameful and insulting manoeuvres other than to see them as an attempt to discredit the institutions of the Republic, to tarnish the reputation of senior officials in order to create confusion and come up with some sober political gains.

It is very possible that the people using inflammatory and scornful language towards Rwandans, those guilty of such shameful acts, erroneously believe that the people will continue to give them the benefit of the doubt and support the damages they deliberately and unconsciously caused to both their political parties as well as to the entire country by jeopardizing multiparty politics which Rwandan fervently planned to make succeed and which does not tally with political terrorism which some believe they would introduce to our hills, in our *communes*.

Honourable Deputies,  
Fellow Rwandans,

At a time when we have serious responsibilities, I would like to appeal to all Rwandans to ensure that they do not get dragged into disturbances by troublemakers, no matter what party they belong to; all Rwandans should remain calm, remind political leaders of their professional code of ethics, and bring to reason those who may want to allow themselves to commit excesses. Let us all together bring an end to these atrocities attributable to poor interpretation of the rules of democracy.

The fact that a party is part of the Government does not grant it the licence to incite its members to trample on the country's dignity, to practice political terrorism and to devote efforts to manoeuvres which may affect the smooth running of institutions.

I can well understand that there are some *bourgmestres* who are not geniuses or who are unable to perform. This is quite normal: the law of large numbers applies here. It is incumbent on the people to make a decision on this matter and thanks to elections, they would be able to do this at regular intervals.

If we were to dismiss in all spheres people public opinion denounce as incompetent, weak, unable to perform-well, I am sure that nobody will disagree - this will have to be done at some other levels too!

In a democracy, the National Assembly is the first judge of the Government's performance. In democracy, only elections represent the will of the people.

Failure to understand this, deciding to act otherwise, to give the impression that you are doing everything to avoid elections - represents the second danger which may affect our multiparty experience.

For this reason, once again, I would like to call on the Government to finalize this democratic instrument *par excellence*, that is, the electoral bill, so that the people may be assured that our country finally has a well-thought out electoral bill which will enable all

parties to prepare for elections slated for late April 1993, at the latest, with full knowledge of the facts, and in conformity with the Accord signed by all the parties represented in the current Government. Any delay shall be considered as subterfuge, contrary to commitments made and contrary to democratic beliefs. The consideration of the bill by the Government and its finalization would enable Rwandans take a decision on its future leaders at all levels within the set timeframe.

The Government is thus being called upon to assume its responsibility. The Government must work in a manner that meets the expectation of the people as well as fulfil national interest. I cannot overemphasize the fact that all the organs provided for in the constitution, particularly the National Assembly and the Government, have to do more to ensure peace prevails over antagonism and that unity remains the leitmotiv of political action of all parties involved in political life.

In particular, the Government must take urgent measures to restore the administrative and judicial authority which has for long been trampled upon. The Government must act in a more decisive manner if it is to prevent the country from sinking into anarchy. It must focus on the most important issues. Justice must be served. It must protect the innocent, punish the guilty, apply the legislation in force.

Deputies,  
Fellow Rwandans,

The third danger which may make the boat sink is a rather incomprehensible phenomenon: destruction, blockages, boycott of the economic life of our country in the name of political freedom.

Again, very often, this is attributable to excesses of the members, recruits of some parties, excesses to be condemned, excesses committed - what a shame, what a dishonour - under the guise of struggle for victory for their party, of political competition, of what not!

How can a person reasonably think, how can a person reasonably believe that by preventing a farmer from selling his produce, by blocking roads, by blocking roads leading to consumer centres he can make his political cause triumph? How can a person for a minute deprive consumers of daily products by imposing artificially high prices, - a criminal act - when he already has a lot of trouble making ends meet, how can you imagine that such a thing could be done in the name of multiparty politics?

How can anyone ever believe that destroying water pipes, starting bush fires, setting forests on fire, trees which the farmer so assiduously maintained, so laboriously planted, the farmer who is very much aware of how important water and trees are to our people; how can anyone imagine that such wanton destruction can be interpreted as nothing other than a desire to destroy; all this for the benefit of the most troubled causes which have nothing, absolutely nothing to do with democratic ideals development and progress.

24/22

Worse still, all these negative and destructive acts committed under the guise of democracy, fuelled by fanatics from some parties are the best ways of discrediting, to its very foundation, the idea of democracy; the best way of depriving the farmer from enjoying the fruit of his labour, of deceiving him, of deceiving the Rwandan population in general.

As long as the language used by politicians remain unclear, equivocal, as long as there are issues of double talk excusing their nihilist behaviour as politics, as long as there is ambiguity, as long as Government officials or the State intervene to request the release of a guilty member of their party, under the pretext that they are members of their parties in spite of the fact that they are guilty of a crime - as long as Government action runs the risk of being compromised, lacks credibility and as long as security and calm are not restored in the country.

Therefore, ladies and gentlemen, together we must strongly denounce these atrocities and bring political party leaders to pledge unflinching support to democratic ideals the way Rwandans see it.

Deputies,  
Fellow Rwandans,

Things are bad at the moment. We are all looking up to the Government. We all want the Government to succeed. Once again, we would like to renew our trust and inform the Government that all good-natured Rwandans pledge their support as long as it meets their expectations.

The expectation is nothing other than a commitment to peace and the internal easing of tension, a commitment to real development of our country.

Only a strong, united Government, which sublimates partisan differences in order to find a solution to the problems which affect peace and the success of the transition programme will help us triumph over adversity.

Only a strong and united Government that has eliminated all partisan behaviour can contribute to a reduction in tension, for if such tension is allowed to worsen, it will exacerbate divisions, set our country back 30 years, create difficulties totally unheard of to date and, in the final analysis, favour those who want to seize power in the country without recourse to democratic methods.

As the Prime Minister is responsible for the Government programme, as the National Assembly is the supreme judge of its action, I would like, in my capacity as a President of the Republic, as guarantor of the functioning of the higher institutions of the Republic, guarantor of national independence and unity, and in accordance with the power vested in me by the Rwandan Constitution, renew today, and in the same spirit which I have just expressed, confidence in Government action so that this Government may become the



24/21

strong Government efficient and united, which the country needs today more than ever before.

The Prime Minister, its Government may count on us to assist them in the discharge of their duties.

Deputies,  
Fellow Rwandans,

The Government has also assumed responsibility and in an official manner too, to ensure a successful conclusion of political negotiations with the organization which attacked our country, that is the RPF.

As you know, all Rwandan Governments have strenuously called for these negotiations in order that, in spite of the pretext advanced to justify the attempt to take over power by force of arms, a peaceful solution may be found and loss of lives and property avoided.

Also, as you know, successive Rwandan Governments have scrupulously insisted on implementing all obligations they subscribed to and on fully respecting all concessions, which were sometimes quite wide but which they deemed appropriate, with the hope of seeing the end of the absurd war and kick-starting real and enviable national development which our country had experienced.

As a result of the pressure exerted by many of Rwanda's allies, another cease-fire was eventually signed in Arusha last 12 July. The cease-fire, which should enter into force on 31 July, is more or less being respected by our aggressors, although in the border areas sporadic infiltrations and bombings continue in spite of the fact that the truce which was meant to have preceded the cease-fire was violated at first light.

The neutral military observer group assigned to supervise the implementation of the cease-fire is taking up position. The special committee responsible for coordinating the activities has begun operations.

With respect to the negotiations, I would like to clear up the misunderstandings which prevail and reassure Rwandans of the position of the Rwandan Government

Thus, unless the people of Rwanda express themselves differently when consulted, the Rwandan position shall remain focused on defending:

- the Republican nature of the Rwandan State;
- the respect of the Constitution and Laws;
- the respect of the Institutions of the State as well as the executive and legislative and judiciary powers
- the unwavering continuation of the on-going democratic process in our country
- the respect for the transition period.

24120

All these principles were unanimously endorsed by the Government after consultation with political and social tendencies in the country.

The negotiation team which the Government dispatched to Arusha was well informed thereof; specific instructions were also given to the team so that it could adopt a language of national consensus and so that its positions may not be improvised so that there would be complete consistency in all positions taken.

This explains why I believe Rwandans may remain assured that measures have been taken to prevent individual actions from dragging our country into doing something it did not intend to do.

Deputies,  
Fellow Rwandans,

A few days ago, I addressed the country following a campaign of lies launched by some political parties trying to discredit the commitment made by the Rwandan Government and the President of the Republic as well as their firmness in the face of negotiations and the main mission to preserve internal peace and security, their conciliatory role and promotion of national unity.

In the same vein, I asked the Prime Minister, and I would like to reiterate this today, to clarify the confusion reigning with respect to the duties of the Ministry of Information and ORINFOR which should be, as we have always wanted, an objective non-partisan information organ serving a collective interest. The confusion was very harmful and almost poisoned the atmosphere of internal peace; also a lot of decisions were taken without consultation contrary to the rules of courtesy and dignity.

Thus, I had to bring tensions under control and announce, with respect to presidential editorials for example and in conformity with Article 44 of the Constitution, that I would later decide what form the President of the Republic's message would take henceforth whenever he addresses the nation.

In that connection, I decided to order the Press and Information Department at the Office of the President of the Republic to henceforth take charge of Presidential intervention; this is an obvious constitutional prerogative and which meet requirement that are in line with presidential responsibilities and are even more strengthened by professional relations with both national and private press organs.

Honourable Deputies  
Fellow Rwandans

This is all I have for you today. We must never forget that everything that we do is geared towards ensuring a safe future for the country and towards raising the hope of our youth so they may inherit a solid nation that is well committed to development and be able to take their destiny in their hands one day.

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**24119**

In conclusion, I would once again like to congratulate the new deputies and remind them of their noble and noteworthy duty in any democratic system. I would like to reiterate, Ladies and Gentlemen, Deputies, that it is my hope that your institution, the National Assembly, will be a forum for democratic discussions and rich exchange of views, that we will together endeavour to promote in our country through plurality of opinions which multiparty politics will understandably trigger.

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