

**RWANDA ROUNDTABLE
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GENEVA**

U.S. Statement

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Introduction

The United States commends the Government of Rwanda for the progress it has made over the last year and a half. Since the last Roundtable in January 1995, and the mid-term review in July of last year, there has been considerable progress toward the reconstitution of society as the Government of Rwanda has begun to rebuild the institutions of governance, re-establish the nation's administrative capacity, and rehabilitate basic facilities. Nonetheless, the transition from relief to development remains fragile. There are critical needs for material and financial support in all sectors, particularly in re-energizing the export economy, managing the external debt, promoting investment in production, and re-building the government's institutional capacity.

This is the Government of Rwanda's Roundtable and we are anxious to hear the Government's views on their priorities and how we, as the international community, can assist them effectively in dealing with these priorities. I also want to take this opportunity to commend UNDP for their efforts in organizing this Roundtable.

Roundtable Policy Framework

The Government of Rwanda has developed a sound policy framework for recovery and development. The two main themes upon which the Government requests international assistance to focus are:

- * support for the rehabilitation of the socioeconomic infrastructure, and;
- assistance to reactivate agricultural and industrial production.

In support of production recovery, the government's program is based on six objectives:

- * preservation of an atmosphere of peace and security;
- * restoration and strengthening national unity;
- * repatriation, resettlement and social reintegration of refugees;

- * improvement of the population's living conditions, especially the resolution of the social problems of orphans, widows and victims of war;
- * development of the national economy; and
- * development of human resources. US Position on the Policy Framework

We believe that the focus and objectives of the policy framework as outlined by the Government are appropriate for reviving the economy and solidifying greater peace and stability for the country. Donors should support the framework, especially in the areas of private sector development, human resources development, institutional capacity building at both the national and local level, and agriculture and health.

A greater proportion of pledged assistance should be channelled directly to government ministries to strengthen the national institutional capacity. In order to strengthen the government's capacity, the international community should provide medium and long-term coordinated technical assistance to line ministries to ensure that the Government meets the established requirements for handling pledged funds.

International NGOs and International organizations should be encouraged to second experienced technical personnel to line ministries, especially for training programs. These secondments should be for at least six months and longer. It is important for NGO's to demonstrate that they genuinely want to train, build Rwandan capacity, and eventually leave.

The government has opted for private sector-oriented, community-based development. Continued support for this strategy of decentralization and private economic initiatives at all levels of Rwandan society, particularly at the local level, should be strongly encouraged and supported.

Women in Transition

Continued emphasis should be given to credit schemes that provide funds for women who work together in collaborative groups to identify and address their family and community income needs. The majority of such on-going projects carried out by women's associations or groups are made up of widows or women who are caring for an average of two to four foster children in addition to their own. It is manifest that the women of Rwanda are key agents of change on the local level during this important transitional phase.

Agriculture

We support strongly the 1996 Roundtable aim to reactivate agricultural production. The Ministry of Agriculture and the agricultural sector at large is definitely

in need of medium and long-term technical assistance. Most of the support systems for agriculture were completely destroyed during the events of 1994. We are concerned that the international agencies and NGOs working in Rwanda have very limited capacity and expertise to train and implement agriculture programs -- the main occupation of 85 to 90% of the Rwandese population.

A major conclusion of a USAID-funded study was that farm animals are the most important determinant of household food security in rural Rwanda. The most important policy implication of this study is that efforts to promote food security should first target the measure acquisition and effective management of livestock and small animals. Thus, accelerated programs for restocking livestock throughout rural Rwanda remains an extremely important objective to improve food security and boost economic recovery.

Repatriation

The refugee camps, particularly in Zaire, remain hotbeds and bases for insurgent and terrorist activities into Rwanda and the region. As long as the status quo is maintained, and Zaire continues to provide an unfettered corridor for arms shipments, the Government of Rwanda will be forced to direct and use most of its economic-resources to defend the country. The uninhibited actions of the former Rwandan military and the Interahamwe contribute to ethnic polarization inside Rwanda and growing insecurity and instability in the region.

UNHCR has been placed in an untenable moral position. There is a conflict between the need to provide services to legitimate refugees under international conventions, and the reality that such assistance also provides material support and sanctuary for the deadly activities of the genocidalists. Not only has Rwanda been affected, but the ethnic cleansing of Tutsis living in the Masisi region of Zaire has been nearly completed, while the international community remains silent.

As these elements of the former government continue to murder and destabilize, they exacerbate ethnic tensions in the region, increasing their domination and power over authentic refugees which, in turn diminishes the odds that refugees will make their own choices to return to their home communes in Rwanda.

My Government believes that the status quo regarding the 1.7 million Rwandan refugees in neighboring countries cannot continue. Widening insecurity along the Zaire/Uganda/Rwanda/Burundi borders threaten current relief and recovery efforts in the region and could potentially pull more victims into the vortex.

While voluntary repatriation remains the preferred option of the U.S. government, the on-the-ground reality in the camps dictates that this option becomes less and less viable over time. While not going into great detail here, my government believes there are three steps that should be given serious consideration by the international community.

A pull strategy should be implemented whereby the humanitarian program should be moved directly to the home communes of the refugees. This would involve the provision of food, seeds and tools, health care and shelter at the commune level.

Second, those camps in the most unstable regions should be closed and their occupants repatriated voluntarily or relocated to camps farther away from the border in smaller sized camps.

Third, those elements among Rwandan and Burundian refugees who are carrying arms and/or are guilty of crimes against humanity should not enjoy refugee status. A way has to be found to apply the exclusion clause of the Geneva and OAU conventions to those people.

Justice

The problem of justice in Rwanda does need to be addressed more effectively by the Government. However, this problem is influenced by what is happening on Rwanda's borders and the increasing security incidents occurring inside Rwanda. Therefore, the issue of justice has to be addressed in the regional context and within the context of the genocide.

The International Community has legitimate concerns over the fact that some 75,000 Rwandans accused of genocide languish in prison two years after the war and still there is not a functioning justice system. It is important, once the the genocide legislation passes the national assembly, that such trials start as soon as possible.

On the issue of justice, we are dealing with a very complex set of problems, many of which we, as the international community may never come to understand or appreciate. However, I would like to place this in a context which I understand and to which our government has attempted to be very sensitive.

When I first visited Rwanda in April 1995, I received some very wise advice from the U.S. Embassy's military attache who had arrived almost immediately after the slaughter. He traveled the country; he witnessed first hand the human carnage of the genocide. His advice was this: if you are going to understand what is happening in Rwanda today, what will happen tomorrow, next month, or for years to come, you have to understand genocide and the enduring consequences of genocide. It permeates, affects and influences human behavior so totally that it is remarkable that the survivors and the government have been able to exercise the degree of restraint they are exhibiting.

I think it is a challenge for those of us in the international community who have never been swept into the vortex of a genocide where family, and friends are mindlessly slaughtered because of one's ethnic background, not to become impatient with what we define as progress. I get the sense that the genocide in Rwanda is becoming an inconvenience for us -- the international community. We expect the Rwandans to put this tragic episode of human history behind them and get on with the future. Don't dwell on the past. It is as if we are dealing with a country that came out of a fairly normal civil war. Nothing is normal about genocide. This is the first sitting government faced with the dilemma of actually prosecuting a genocide that was directed at the particular ethnic group of many officials of the government

Based upon the number of fact-finding trips I have taken to the region since last April, including the refugee camps, and the increasingly documentation being

compiled by credible human rights and refugee organizations, it is my judgement that the genocide continues. African Rights recently published a report entitled: Rwanda: Killing the Evidence, which documents the continued murders, attempted murders, and intimidation of witnesses to the genocide, inside Rwanda. The victims are both Tutsi and Hutu.

The U.S. Committee for Refugees also recently published a report on the ethnic cleansing by Ex-Far and Interahamwe, often in collusion with Zairois forces, occurring in Masisi. Just as the international community failed to act to prevent the Rwandan genocide, the international community stands silent as the genocidal forces continue to work their will both inside Rwanda and in neighboring Zaire.

One of the most important analyses detailing the history of the genocide was written by Gerard Prunier, a French academician. The seeds for this genocide were planted decades ago. The roots remain firmly imbedded in an ideology that continues to be the principle guiding the ex-government and RDR. The Tutsis are not human; they are cockroaches that need to be exterminated. This ideology has even given religious legitimacy among some clergy, both catholic and protestant -- Tutsis are devils and it is not against the laws of God to kill a devil

I think we are at a crossroads as an international community when it comes to Rwanda. After studying and restudying Prunier's dissertation on the history of the Rwandan genocide, I think his concluding paragraph offers considerable food for thought, if not the reality facing all of us gathered here. I quote:

"...this author has no serious hope that either justice or money will come (to Rwanda), since Rwanda is a small landlocked African nation without any strategic or economic interest. It is also populated with blacks, not much of a saving grace in the white minds of men of power. If justice and money do not come, then death will return -- and will duly be covered [by an](#).eager media, for the benefit of a conventionally horrified public opinion which will finance another round of humanitarian aid,"

My friends, death never left Rwanda. The difference between now and two years ago -- when we believed that the genocide had ended -- is that death is occurring with increasing frequency.

The genocide continues. It is time to look at other options to maintaining the current status of the refugee camps no matter how difficult it is to reconcile those options with refugee conventions. However, it should be emphasized that that these conventions were international. conventions developed for an entirely different set of circumstances that those we are facing today. This is not a traditional refugee problem.

On a final note, I am still haunted by the role that humanitarian assistance and humanitarian sanctuary in Thailand played in guaranteeing the survival of the Khmer Rouge. We all tried to do the right thing, but we accomplished the wrong result. Nearly twenty years later, the people of-Cambodia are still paying the price. The situation in the refugee camps, particularly in Zaire, is not unlike the choices we faced 20 years ago on Cambodia. And I very much hope that we do not repeat the same errors. It will not be easy. The government of Rwanda must eventually make some

hard choices to confront a domestic political problem that only Rwandans can solve. The international community must address the reality of Rwanda -- and not a preconceived notion of what Rwanda should be. And the governments of the region must accept that they share a responsibility to assist in bringing it to an end the terrorism of genocide.

It is my hope that we all demonstrate the resolve that "never again" applies to all peoples, everywhere on this fragile planet of ours.