

REPUBLIC OF RWANDA



MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

OPENING REMARKS BY THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY GENERAL DURING
THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW BREAKFAST MEETING WITH DEVELOPMENT
PARTINERS

KIGALI, MARRIOTT HOTEL, 21 MAY 2019

Excellencies Ambassadors;

Excellencies High Commissioners;

Excellency Resident Coordinator of ONE UN/Rwanda;

Excellency Resident Representative of UNDP;

Excellencies Heads of Cooperation and Mission;

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning!

Let me first take this opportunity to sincerely thank you for honouring our invitation and joining us at this breakfast meeting.

We are aware of the many responsibilities you have and we are grateful that you spared your morning hours for us.

Excellencies,

As you know, Rwanda appeared before the Human Rights Council UPR Working Group three and a half years ago, for its second cycle review. During its review, Rwanda accepted 50 recommendations for implementation before the next cycle scheduled in November 2020.

The timeline for UPR engagement in the current cycle is such that the process for national consultation ends with May 2019. This stage is followed by the drafting of the report and ultimately submission and review in November 2020.

Right from the beginning of this particular process, we decided together with the stakeholders that the process will be Government led, inclusive and open to all stakeholders including Civil Society, Private sector and Development Partners. This deliberate choice was made to ensure that stakeholders are meaningfully involved in the process and that at the reporting time our report will include the views of all.

Excellencies,

To maintain the inclusiveness and openness of the process, the Ministry of Justice has to date organized three stakeholders' gatherings to assess progress. This breakfast meeting is the first one of its kind, organized for Development partners. These meetings follow stakeholders' meeting held in 2016 during which a roadmap of implementation was developed and subsequently shared with all relevant institutions.

- On 6th February 2018 we organized a mid-term review of the status of the implementation.
- On 12th June 2018, we organized a follow up workshop.
- From 27th to 28th September 2018, a retreat with stakeholders to assess the progress was held in Rubavu, Western Province.

Excellencies;

Today's breakfast meeting brings us together because of our respective contribution and interest in the Country's human rights advancement agenda in general and the UPR process in particular. Development Partners have been extending to us resources, both human and material, we continue to count on your support, therefore we ought to make time to evaluate progress.

This particular meeting was organized in collaboration with ONE UN Rwanda, to create an opportunity for us to share updates on the status of implementation of the recommendations. A presentation, on the status will shortly be made based, on which we will have a discussion on the next steps.

Key implementation highlights include among others:

- Decriminalization of defamation
- Establishment of a National Preventive Mechanisms (NPM) as provided in the National Human Rights Commission Law and the OPCAT.
- Repeal of provisions hindering access to safe legal abortion.
- Scaling up of Isange One Stop Centers, from 12 to 44.
- Expansion of the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court to permit CSOs and interested persons to file public interest litigation.

I note that most of us are not totally new in this process. A good number of us have attended at least one of the stakeholder meetings I just alluded to. That said permit me to report on the organisational assignments you gave us.

- As we agreed, and with a view to maintaining this process open, the Ministry created a group email which serves to ease communication between Members of the Treaty Body Reporting Task Force. Currently, the group has more than 60 contacts from both Government's Institutions and Civil Society. The group will continue to be updated and any person interested in the reporting process can be added.
- In addition, the Ministry has produced the first draft report. The report will continue to be updated until end of January next year. The plan is that before the end of the first quarter of the year 2019/2020 (July-September 2019) the draft report will be made available online to permit easy access for and inputs from all stakeholders.
- Further, let me take this advance opportunity to inform you that the Ministry plans to convene the fourth stakeholders' meeting this June and we will be grateful to see you again. Please encourage yourselves not to miss because it will be a great workshop both in content and form.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate the Government of Rwanda's unwavering commitment in protecting and advancing human rights. As we have always stated, I wish to emphasize again that, the Geneva UPR cycle is not the beneficiary of this process. The beneficiaries are the Rwandan people.

Therefore, success in protecting, preserving and promoting human rights is here, at home, before it is reported anywhere.

Once again, thank you for being here!