



MINISTRY OF JUSTICE
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**MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY GENERAL WELCOMING
REMARKS AT THE OPENING CEREMONY**

7th JRLOS Peer Review Retreat RUBAVU 22nd March 2018

The Honourable Chief Justice;

Honourable Ministers;

Honourable Minister of State;

The Honourable Deputy Chief Justice;

The ONE UN Resident Coordinator;

Your Excellency Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands;

Members of the Justice Sector Leadership Group and Steering Committee;

Development Partners, Private Sector and Stakeholders of the Justice Sector;

Representatives from the various Justice Sector Institutions;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Permit me to welcome all of you to this 7th Justice Sector Peer Review Retreat. Your presence here is a commitment to continue building a strong Justice Sector in our Country.

I would like to extend special recognition and thanks to you Honourable Chief Justice and dear Colleagues Ministers for making time for us despite your workload. Thank you.

Allow me also to welcome and most sincerely thank our Development Partners, represented here by the ONE UN Resident Coordinator Mr. Fodé NDIAYE, Her Excellency the Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands,

Private Sector representatives, Civil Society Organisations for being here and for walking the journey together with us towards an efficient Justice Sector.

Honourable Chief Justice;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

We are honoured to receive new participants to the Peer Review Retreat or officials attending the retreat in new positions, including:

- The new ONE UN Resident Coordinator **Mr. Fodé NDIAYE;**
- The new Rector of the Institute of Legal Practice and Development (ILPD): **Dr. KAYIHURA Muganga Didas;**
- The Chairman of the Board of Directors of Rwanda Forensic Laboratory (RFL): **Lt. Col. KARANGWA Charles;**
- The Director General of the National Rehabilitation Service (NRS): **Mr. BOSENIBAMWE Aimé,**
- The Secretary General of Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB) **Col. RUHUNGA Jeannot,** and some others who are new in this forum: You are all welcome!

The Honourable Chief Justice;

During the last Peer Review Retreat, we made a number of recommendations on several matters including the following:

- ✓ The Case backlog into Courts;
- ✓ The Government Assets recovery;
- ✓ Issue of people convicted by Gacaca Courts who do not serve their sentences;
- ✓ The Prosecution of suspects of genocide, genocide denial and genocide ideology living abroad;

- ✓ The increasing number of suspects, prisoners and delinquents in our transit centers, Police detention facilities and prisons;
- ✓ Emerging crimes including cybercrimes, gender based violence, drugs use and trafficking, human trafficking, economic and financial crimes that call for appropriate strategies and measures;
- ✓ Self-evaluation vis-à-vis the implementation of the Sector Strategic Plan II (2013-2018), EDPRS II, Vision 2020 and alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), AU Agenda and our Vision 2050.

As always this retreat allows us the opportunity for a backward review to evaluate what we have realized and to reengineer our system.

During our Peer Review Retreat, we openly discuss our strengths and weaknesses, identify threats and opportunities, and challenge each other in order to arrive at recommendation and strategies that will deliver a better Justice Service to our population.

The Honourable Chief Justice;

Even though the journey is still long, we have registered some key achievements since the last Peer Review retreat including among others:

- To address backlogs in the Courts, bills on Courts restructuring have been adopted and are pending enactment;
- A new JRLO Sector Strategic Plan (2018-2014) aligned with the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1), SDGs has been developed and adopted;
- More efforts have been deployed for access to quality justice and citizen's involvement in justice programmes through the reinforcement of Abunzi Mediation Committees, MAJ. And JRLOS District Committees outreach programmes;
- Justice Sector stakeholders joined efforts for a better Justice service delivery and this is testified by International Awards as well as the Citizen Satisfaction scores vis-à-vis our different institutions service delivery;

- The Citizen Report Card 2017 shows that the satisfaction of the population about the service of MAJ is evaluated beyond 75%.
- The same Citizen Report Card reveals that citizens' confidence in the service provided by Rwanda National Police and Courts is 98.1% and 85.8% respectively.
- Out of 24 specialized courses identified and adopted by the Justice Sector, ILPD started with 6 of them that are with by 156 lawyers enrolled from our respective institutions staffs.
- We have concluded 3 extradition treaties with three countries and a number of others are under negotiation;
- As of end of 2017 Integrated Electronic Case Management System is deployed in all Courts, Prosecution Offices, RCS and MINIJUST Offices and requisite negotiations are underway to see all Police Stations connected to that system.

Honourable Chief Justice;

I would like to extend sincere thanks to our Development Partners and Civil Society Organizations. They have been great contributors towards our sector's achievements. Since our last Peer Review Retreat, they have been very participative in legal awareness campaigns across the country, in the preparation of the JRLO Sector Strategic Plan, in conducting high quality studies in several fields of Justice delivery and other various initiatives that ensure the progress of our Sector.

The Ministry of Justice has started meeting both Civil Society Organizations representatives as well as Development Partners in different fora to exchange views, learn about achievements, listen to advice, our intent being to meet all Civil Society Organizations operating in the field of Justice, Human Rights, Reconciliation, Law, Order, Healing, Rehabilitation, Peace building, etc, by the end of this Financial Year.

The Honourable Chief Justice;

This 7th Peer Review Retreat offers to all of us the opportunity to once again cross-check our achievements, discuss our challenges in general but assess more specifically the main issues that affect the Justice service delivery.

The theme of this 7th Peer Review Retreat is: “*The Rwanda we want: Reengineering our Justice System to address emerging issues that undermine the National Development*”.

We cannot ensure a better future for Rwanda when without winning over emerging and existing crimes such as drugs abuse and trafficking, corruption, human trafficking, cybercrimes, and others. We cannot continue behaving the same way and expect different results. The ideal of a crime free or zero impunity society is an ideal we should keep because it drives our resolve to fight crime all the time and not let up.

This retreat will analyze emerging and other crimes and align strategies aimed at addressing.

This retreat will also review the progress made in implementing the 6th Peer Review Retreat resolutions, the Vision 2020, the EDPRS II, and to discuss strategies that will guide the implementation of the Justice Sector Strategic Plan (2018-19/2023-24) in line with the National Strategy for Transformation 1, the UN Sustainable Development Goals/SDGs, and the Rwanda Vision 2050.

The Honourable Chief Justice;

Our discussions during this retreat will also have a look at recurrent issues as well as new policies that may help in handling some of problems that still characterize our system, including:

- The increasing backlog cases from 23.3% in 2016/17 to 26.89% in Q1 and to 30.78% in Q2 of 2017/18;

- IECMS challenges: non availability of infrastructure in some planned RNP offices, lack of a pool of staff including local developers who can handle IECMS needed changes in long period of time;
- The public assets recovery and judgments execution;
- The lack of appropriate measures to track genocide fugitives sentenced by Gacaca Courts who didn't serve their sentences;
- The dangers of corruption whether real or perceived, in justice sector institutions
- Innovative & creative strategies for efficient management of offenders including Alternative measures to imprisonment not yet put in place (Electronic Monitoring System, Plea Bargaining, Alternative Sentences, Use of Bail by focusing on certain crimes at a time, etc);
- Update of existing policies and development of needed ones, including the Criminal Justice Policy and Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms Policy.

The Honourable Chief Justice;

As you might have seen on the agenda, we tried to insert more space for discussion and interaction in between presentations and listen to as many innovative ideas as possible. Please let us use the moment to shape the justice sector we want.

Once again, I welcome everyone to this retreat and wish you a fruitful retreat. Besides the busy schedule, remember this is a retreat at a beach-so take time to free up and relax.

Thank you for your kind attention.