

CLOSING REMARKS: CONSIDERATION OF RWANDA'S FOURTH PERIODIC REPORT ON THE COVENANT ON CIVIL & POLITICAL RIGHTS

Distinguished Chair, Members of the Committee, Representatives of Civil Society

- 1. Rwanda is pleased to have had this opportunity to engage with the Human Rights Committee on the situation of civil and political rights in Rwanda. We have taken careful note of all the issues raised by the Members of the Committee and the various submissions by civil society. We have sought to respond to, clarify and contextualise all the issues raised and we will provide responses in writing to all the issues raised within the statutory period.**
- 2. Rwanda is proud of the progress it has registered in the promotion and protection of all human rights and in particular civil and political rights. Rwanda will also be the first to acknowledge that we can do more, we can learn from others and benefit from opportunities such as the one provided by this session. This is because the bar that we have set for ourselves is a very high one. We strive for the highest attainable standards for all our people, it is the main purpose of our government to ensure the constant and consistent improvement of the lives of Rwandans.**
- 3. As I stated yesterday, it is simply not a matter of the numbers of institutions created, legislation passed, treaties ratified or economic and social statistics but rather it is about real impact on the lives of**

our people. That is the true measure of progress in the enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms.

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- 4. Various Members of the Committee have in one form or another alluded to our history and in particular to the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. Chair, you will permit me to take particular issue with any assertion that our history somehow absolves us from any obligations that we have undertaken or in some way excuses us of our responsibilities to ourselves first and foremost. Quite the contrary Mr. Chair, it rather emboldens our resolve not to be defined by that history. It informs the choices we make for ourselves. It serves as a constant reminder of where we have come from and ensures that we do all we can to prevent it from happening again.**
- 5. It is what has led our present dispensation to be based on a culture that values good governance, a diversity of views, consensus building, citizen participation, that values the role and contribution of women and men equally. At the core of that dispensation are the human rights of all Rwandans. These are the choices and values that Rwandans have decided to be defined by.**
- 6. I must add that for Rwanda and Rwandans, there does not exist a choice between development and progress on the one hand and the protection of human rights on the other. They are rather mutually**

reinforcing. It would be a fallacy of false choice to suggest otherwise.

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- 7. In less than a week from today, it will be forty years since the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights entered into force in Rwanda. It is the firm conviction of Rwanda that the rights enshrined in it have continued to flourish and the framework for their promotion and protection has gone from strength to strength. Rwanda is committed to futhering the advancement of those rights and will collaborate with the Human Rights Committee, other relevant human rights mechanisms and all stakeholders to that end. We are not perfect and challenges do remain, what is not in question, is our intent to constantly improve the lives of Rwandans. We are certain that the presentation of our next periodic report will reflect even more progress.**

I thank you for your kind attention.