

# REPUBLIC OF RWANDA



**MINISTRY OF JUSTICE  
P.O. BOX 160 KIGALI**

## **Speech of the Minister of Justice/Attorney General at the CSOs Workshop to analyze and propose follow-up and implementation strategies of UPR recommendations given to Rwanda during the 23<sup>rd</sup> session of the Human Rights Council**

**September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016  
Golden Tulip Hotel, Nyamata**

- ***Your Excellency, ONE UN Resident Coordinator***
- ***Excellencies representatives of Diplomatic missions in Rwanda***
- ***Excellencies Development Partners***
- ***Distinguished Members of the civil society***
- ***All protocols observed***
- ***Ladies and Gentlemen;***

*Let me first of all thank ONE-UN and the Rwanda Civil Society for organizing this workshop. This is an event of great significance to Rwanda's human rights work in the UPR cycle. It is part of the continuous and active engagement with a process which has proved highly valuable in our own work, and which has provided an encouraging example of what Rwanda can do to promote the respect of human rights.*

Promoting and respecting human rights is a core value and a central priority for the Government of Rwanda. We have therefore greatly welcomed the opportunity of the UPR to engage in our human rights work with interested partners. Ensuring respect for our international human rights obligations is a continuous process. Dialogue, as well as periodic and constructive scrutiny, contributes to furthering the values which our society is based on.

Rwanda is a proponent of the UPR since its inception in 2006. Our first cycle of the UPR was a success as demonstrated by the number of recommendations we implemented before the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle begun. We are optimistic that the 50 recommendations accepted by Rwanda at the second cycle will all be implemented before the next review.

Our optimism is based on, among other things, the finalized national roadmap for implementation of Rwanda's 2<sup>nd</sup> UPR recommendations. This matrix has been developed by the National Treaty Body Reporting Task force which brings together Government and Civil Society Organizations. I hope the matrix will be shared at this workshop, and after, with the relevant institutions concerned and interested so that implementation can start. Let me call on all of us to be and remain engaged as we have started.

We believe that UPR provides a platform which is conducive for engagement between all actors to address issues of concern. Our focus as we indicated before is first and foremost, on our people who put their trust in their Government to protect and promote their rights. So for us, again, the UPR is not a Geneva affair. It is a Rwanda full time affair with a Geneva part time component. While we are happy and ready to engage on human rights, we believe it would be abdication of duty to sit and wait for human rights activists or lectures from friends and partners. They should find us on the way and travel with us.

The UPR process offers an opportunity for interested civil society organizations (CSOs) to advocate and work for improved observance of human rights. I am very glad that many national civil society organizations individually or collectively took part in the previous process by producing their own alternative reports and putting forward particular issues concerning different fields.

For the record, let me say we place a very high value and premium on these alternative or shadow reports. For the record let me say as well that the work of engaged and constructive CSO's results in benefits for the Government, the citizens and the CSO's themselves. That said, our view is that these reports should be frank and accurate. During this cycle we shall

reach out to all interested CSO's in the hope that at the reporting time in 2019, there will be broad consensus about our report including on issues we may disagree on or have differing approaches to. We will also have a general expectation of the contents of the coalition's shadow reports. They will choose whether to share with us or not. And it will be fine with us.

The follow-up of the UPR Recommendations is the most critical and important phase of the whole UPR process. This phase leads to the realization of the UPR objective which is the "improvement of the human rights situation on the ground". The success of the follow-up phase ascertains the efficiency and credibility of the mechanism and demonstrates to what level States are engaged in the promotion and strengthening of human rights. The Government is committed to the implementation of each recommendation. I thank the partners working with us and I encourage continued engagement so that in the end we all say we did it together or that we faced specific economic, legislative awareness and capacity realities or challenges together.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Just after the recent reporting time we heard stories of a certain CSO facing harassment from the State allegedly because it held views different from those of the State on the UPR. First of all, this is untrue. The Ministry of Justice is the Government agency responsible for the UPR, we have not and we do not engage with partners, even those we disagree with, in such fashion. Secondly, it would be unnecessary because the country report we submitted attempted to be as comprehensive and qualitative as possible. I do not think that a single CSO, working clandestinely, waiting to surface and surprise us in Geneva, could produce a better report. Indeed this was the general agreement after we read the particular shadow report. That a totally skewed issue went all the way to a whole four special rapporteurs was unfortunate. One gentleman in that CSO still alleges that he was sent to his home by immigration because of that CSO's views that we didn't agree with. This again is wrong and mischievous. After some due diligence, we have found that this isn't bona fide as well. I have raised this because we believe we can arrive at the reporting time safely, in mutual respect and without unnecessary confusion. If we all work frankly we will achieve it. I promise that Rwanda will not be found wanting.

One practice that I suggest should guide this cycle is service to the Rwanda people. Let us have conversations on all issues of concern, even those we disagree on. We may not resolve all, we may not achieve outright agreement, but understanding and respecting each other's position and burden of responsibility for results will amount to tremendous progress. The second thing we should do in this cycle is not to ignore history. For example when we discuss freedoms of press, speech, expression, association, media, etc... we should always pay attention to the limitations parliament has placed on them after carefully balancing the immense benefit to be derived from their enjoyment and the price Rwanda paid 22 short years ago for reckless enjoyment of the same. This is called context. There is no situation in the world without a context. Let us engage about OUR content and process, in OUR context and arrive at OUR report. This is how issues are addressed within their particular context.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The UPR is not a 4 year sports tournament with finals in Geneva. It is about real lives of real people in our Villages, Cells, Sectors, Districts and Provinces. It is about their hopes, aspirations, fears and doubts. It is part of Rwanda's, unity and reconciliation and the whole resurrection and healing process, not separated or divorced from it. It is not a standalone project.

It is part of the broad range of social, political and economic rights, the exercise of which forms the basis upon which our unity reconciliation barometer now measures 92%, rule of law satisfaction is over 70%, we are almost the best country to be a woman globally, we are almost the safest country to walk alone at night, our media has expanded probably over 40 fold in 10 years, political power is shared and no shade is left out, the genocide ideology is on its final exist because its ideologues and lieutenants have been denied space by the population and civil society has expanded more than 10 fold in less than 10 years. These things do not happen in isolation. They do not happen at midnight. They evolve and each reinforces the other. The UPR is part of this whole process. Any attempt to isolate it is energy lost.

We believe in learning and growing stronger with each cycle. It is my hope that this cycle will see more cooperation, openness, condour and humility from all actors.

Distinguished guests  
Ladies and gentlemen,

In conclusion, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all of our development partners and actors in this process. We look forward to your continued engagement and support to make this cycle a success. I have no doubt that this workshop will add real value to the understanding of the content, process and context of the UPR and lead to a qualitative end. Rwanda supports the Universal Periodic Review process as it allows us to engage constructively on issues that affect our people. I know we are not perfect but I know also that this process will make us better, if not perfect, if we continue to be steadfast and focused on its objectives.

I thank you and wish you a fruitful workshop.