STATEMENT BY H.E AMB. HOPE TUMUKUNDE GASATURA ON
THE 29TH COMMEMORATION OF THE 1994 GENOCIDE AGAINST THE TUTSI IN RWANDA
ADDIS ABABA, 7TH APRIL 2023
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Your Excellency, Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the AU Commission,
Your Excellency, Amb. Birutkan Ayano, Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
representing the government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,
Excellency Amb. Assoumani Youssouf, Chairperson of the PRC,
Excellency Dr. Monique Nsanzabaganwa, DCP of the AU Commission,
Excellency Amb. Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for PAPS and other AU Commissioners present,
Excellences Ambassadors and all the members of the diplomatic corps,
Officials of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,
Religious leaders here today, Members of the Academia,
Civil Society Organizations, AU Staff here present,
Dear Rwandan Community, Dear Students,
Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen; All protocols observed.

1. First of all, we would like to extend our gratitude to everyone in attendance today for the solidarity with Rwandans as we continue to remember the more than one million innocent lives that were killed in the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi - exactly 29 years ago today.

2. While 29 years can be perceived as a relatively short period, for Rwandans especially survivors, it represents an extraordinary milestone of survival and resilience. Between April 7th, 1994, and July 3rd, 1994, the then extremist-led government in Rwanda launched a systematic extermination that killed more than 1 million members of the Tutsi community within 100 days.

3. This day is, therefore, both a time to honor the victims and survivors and to extract from this senseless slaughter the lessons that can still be learned to prevent genocides in the future.

4. Seeds of hate were planted in Rwanda through divisive tactics by colonialists. What used to be social classes were transformed into ethnic identities by the colonial authorities who wanted and indeed achieved their divide and rule policy in our country. Unfortunately, these imaginary races became governance tools for the post-independent regimes which ruled Rwanda until 1994, presiding over a period that shaped and planned the path to the Genocide.

5. Discrimination, refugee crises, and murder were all the order of the day caused by hate speech of post-independence administrations.
6. Since the Genocide against the Tutsi is one of the worst eras in human history, one would think that humanity has learned lessons from this tragic event. But the same actors who championed and promoted the politics of hate, segregation, and discrimination against the Tutsi in Rwanda are now promoting denial and supported regionally and internationally.

7. Genocide denial narratives traumatize survivors and their descendants. Today, the mistreatments of survivors as well as the contempt for memorials and monuments that serve as reminders of the Tutsi Genocide, remain serious issues.

8. Deniers of the Genocide still conceal information about the remains of Tutsis whose were destroyed during the Genocide in an effort to divert attention. Also, by moving about freely and unchecked in many nations, genocide offenders continue to evade justice and spread misinformation on social media. Some of these fugitives have had Gacaca court judgments rendered against them.

9. This commemoration is therefore, a communal plea to redouble our efforts to stop similar horrors from ever occurring again. The continued troubling trends of growing expressions of racism, and intolerance that results in the dissemination of hate speech and calls for violence cannot be left unchallenged. The same situation that was prevalent in Rwanda in 1994 is now entrenched in numerous parts of our continent and the rest of the world.

10. Where is our collective commitment to upholding the Responsibility to protect principle that seeks to ensure that the international community never again fails to halt genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity? It suffices to recall that this principle emerged in response to the failure of the international community to respond to mass atrocities committed in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Almost 30 years later is not the time to relent!

11. The primary obligation to prevent atrocious crimes lies in the hands of individual States. No matter their nationality, genocide perpetrators should be subject to legal structures for penalty. Failing to do so will only make more atrocities likely in future.

12. The role that education plays in preventing genocide from occurring or reoccurring cannot be emphasized enough. Through the development of a continental curriculum on preventing genocide, for example, young people could be taught about appreciating diversity and the hazards of all forms of bigotry.

13. In Rwanda, out constitution adopted fundamental principles in its 10th article, and one of them is the commitment to prevent and punish the crime of genocide, fighting against denial and revisionism as well as the eradication of genocide ideology and all its manifestations.

14. In addition, Rwanda enacted law n° 59/2018 on the crime of genocide ideology and related crimes. The Rwandan Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement has the mandate of
preserving memory, reinforcing national unity and promoting citizenship education. Unity and reconciliation of Rwandans remains our priority number one.

15. My government also continues to sensitize the international community to put in place laws that criminalize genocide and genocide ideology and is collaborating with national and foreign partners in the fight against denial and revisionism of the Genocide against the Tutsi.

16. All these are efforts towards never again that every nation should strive to have nationally. Such combined efforts will add up to a big force that will make sure Never Again is not just a slogan. We call on all Member States to enact legislations on hate speeches, ideologies of extremism among different groups, as well as marginalization and discrimination of any kind of groups;

17. By observing this AU Day of Commemoration of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi on April 7th 2023, we renew our call to all AU Member States, and relevant continental organizations, as well as civil society organizations, to recommit to preventing and fighting against genocide and other serious crimes under international law, and underscores the importance of learning from what happened in Rwanda. Commemoration is a global framework to honor the victims, comfort survivors and pay tribute to all those who in one way or another played a role in putting an end to the genocide.

18. Commemoration also is an opportunity to recall the current recurrences of hate speech and genocidal ideology still rampant across our continent and more precisely in our region. The 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi was the product of a long and well-planned program rooted in a lengthy ideological mobilization. It happened in broad daylight in stages that shouldn’t be allowed to be replicated elsewhere.

19. **Excellency Chairperson of the commission,** We continue to be hopeful that soon/one day we will have 2 critical elements in all this discussion of fighting hate crimes and genocide in Africa. These two elements are in your hands and those of your team. These are:

- The human rights memorial here at the AU HQ. Memorials are critical in education and research but especially for remembrance. This special project is long overdue. Even the phase one of a virtual memorial that the UNOAU is willing to support financially has been delayed internally going back and forth.

- The second critical element is the appointment of an AU Special envoy on the prevention of hate crimes and genocide without which we will continue to come here, and repeat ourselves with no action. We are aware of the austerity phase the union is in But!

20. I conclude by again appealing to all of us is to recall our common responsibility to combat genocide ideology and denial. **I thank you for your kind attention.**