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**International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
Tribunal Pénal International pour le Rwanda**

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COMMEMORATION EVENT - 20th ANNIVERSARY OF THE ICTR

JUDGE VAGN JOENSEN, PRESIDENT
8 November 2014

Your Excellency Dr. Mohammed Gharib Billal, Vice-President of the United Republic of Tanzania

Your Excellency High Commissioner Eugene Kayihura, Representative of the Government of Rwanda

Distinguished Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Legal Counsel, Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares,

Distinguished Representative from IBUKA, Executive Secretary, Mr. Naphtal Ahishakiye, Prosecutor Jallow,

Registrar Majola,

Excellencies,

Esteemed Colleagues,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning. It is a distinct honour and privilege to welcome you all to this event commemorating the 20th Anniversary of the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. As I look around at this most inspiring turnout, I cannot express how grateful we are that you all have travelled from near and far to be with us today.

Thank you, Master of Ceremonies, for leading us in the moment of silence in memory of the victims of the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda. As we gather here on this most important occasion, we reflect on where Rwanda and the world were 20 years ago, and how far we have come since then.

20 years ago, the collective conscience of mankind was shocked by the magnitude of the brutality perpetrated in Rwanda;

20 years ago, more than 800,000 human beings were systematically slaughtered in a period of 100 days during the Genocide that targeted the Tutsi. Also, many moderate Hutu, Twa and others who stood in opposition to the genocidal campaign suffered the same fate as their Tutsi brothers and sisters;

20 years ago, the world witnessed one of the greatest humanitarian tragedies of modern times. With its judiciary in ruins after the genocide, Rwanda asked the United Nations to help bring to justice those who planned and executed the Genocide; and

20 years ago today, the United Nations Security Council passed resolution 955 establishing the ICTR. Together with the creation of the ICTY one year earlier, this marked a new chapter in accountability mechanisms and forever altered the landscape of international justice.

Today we recall the Tribunal's contributions, through judicial decisions, outreach and capacity building initiatives, to sustained peace in Rwanda and to the fight against impunity. We are proud that the Tribunal, nearing completion of its mandate, brought justice to victims and survivors, indicted 93 individuals and heard the powerful accounts of more than 3,500 witnesses who have ensured that the international community will never forget the tragic events that took place in Rwanda in 1994. We are also proud of the relationship that has developed between the ICTR and Rwanda and which can be seen through the lens of the ICTR's referral programme, which has transferred a total of eight cases to Rwanda and represents what can be accomplished when international and domestic judiciaries work together to improve existing legal systems, especially those in post-conflict environments.

As was discussed during this week's Legacy Symposium, the international community has witnessed an evolution of international law since 1994, an evolution that saw

the ICTR at the forefront of many “firsts”. The ICTR became the first international tribunal to enter a judgement for genocide and the first to interpret the definition of genocide set forth in the Genocide Convention.

The ICTR defined for the first time the crime of rape in international criminal law, and it recognised rape as a means of perpetrating genocide and significantly expanded the law with respect to sexual violence crimes. The conviction of Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, the first of its kind, for her role in ordering the rapes of Tutsi women and girls demonstrated that the perpetrators of sexual violence, like their victims, are not limited to any one gender.

In 1998, the ICTR became the first international tribunal since Nuremberg and Tokyo to issue a judgement against a former head of government and demonstrated that in the fight against impunity no person is immune from accountability. The Tribunal also rendered the first judgement examining the role of the media with respect to direct and public incitement to commit genocide. It is now recognised that civilians can also be prosecuted for international crimes when they participate in hostilities.

Many of these “firsts” represent the foundation of international legal concepts that continue to be used by other courts and demonstrate the ICTR’s impact on codifying numerous facets of international criminal law and humanitarian law that were undeveloped 20 years ago.

In addition to these contributions to international law, the ICTR has also collected a significant amount of institutional knowledge on the administration of an international tribunal and spearheaded outreach and capacity building programmes to share best practices and expertise between international and domestic institutions. The best practices manuals, including those on the prosecution of sexual violence crimes and the tracking and arrest of fugitives, are just part of the initiatives that will ensure that the Tribunal’s work is available to help future triers of international crimes, increasingly in domestic jurisdictions. The

Tribunal also continues to support the development of information centres, genocide awareness-raising campaigns, and training programmes for Rwandan legal professionals and others in the Great Lakes region.

All of these achievements, all of the “firsts” and all of the lessons we have learnt about international justice in the past two decades would not have been possible without the hard work of our staff, both current and former, to whom we renew our deepest gratitude today.

As the Tribunal continues to make preparations for closure and reflects on two decades of challenging impunity, we must recall that we would not exist without the cooperation provided by the Governments of Rwanda and Tanzania. 20 years ago, Rwanda asked the international community to help bring to justice perpetrators of international crimes committed in its territory. And 20 years ago, Tanzania rose to the challenge by providing a home for this Tribunal to embark on its formidable task. We have the honour of having with us today representatives from both governments.

It is now my great privilege and honour to introduce our first honoured guest, His Excellency Dr. Mohammed Gharib Billal, the Vice-President of the United Republic of Tanzania. The Government of Tanzania has long been a pillar of strength, security, and stability in the region. From hosting the Arusha peace talks prior to 1994 to providing a place for the Tribunal to operate safely for the past 20 years, Tanzania has remained a strong supporter of peace and justice. From the opening of the first purpose-built United Nations detention facility in Arusha to the opening of the African Court of Human and People’s Rights in Arusha, Tanzania continues to demonstrate its commitment to the fight against impunity and has solidified itself as a hub for international justice. On behalf of the Tribunal, I want to express our sincere appreciation to Dr. Billal for his government’s willingness to continue to host the ICTR until its closure.

Although the ICTR is about to reach the end of its journey, it is important to never forget that the search for justice will continue after the closure of the ICTR through the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals, the institution carrying on the residual functions of the ICTR and ICTY, and various other national authorities and courts will carry the torch and continue the tremendous efforts that the United Nations and the ICTR started 20 years ago.

Thank you once again to all of you for your participation in this week's events, and to everybody who has been a part of the Tribunal's work over the past 20 years. It is now my great honour to invite the Vice-President of the United Republic of Tanzania, His Excellency Dr. Mohammed Gharib Billal to take the floor.