

15 April 2013



Secretary-General

SG/SM/14949

AFR/2597

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MUST DO MORE TO PREVENT ATROCITIES, SECRETARY-GENERAL.

STRESSES IN REMARKS COMMEMORATING RWANDA GENOCIDE

Following are UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's remarks, as delivered at the ceremony to commemorate the nineteenth anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda, in New York on 15 April:

I thank all of you for coming together this evening.

Before we start this important ceremony, allow me to say a few words about the bombing today during the running of the Boston Marathon.

Reports are still coming in, and details are few. But we do know that there are casualties, with people dead and wounded. I condemn this senseless violence, which is all the more appalling for taking place at an event renowned for bringing people together from around the world in a spirit of sportsmanship and harmony.

I would like to express my deepest condolences to the families of the victims, and to wish those wounded a speedy recovery. As more details emerge, I am sure we will return to this with a more formal statement. But, for now, I just wanted to say that my thoughts are with everyone in Boston.

In commemorating the nineteenth anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda, we remember the innocent people who were murdered solely because of their identity. We pay tribute to those who risked their lives to save their fellow citizens. Such heroes stand out for being so few in number.

Let me offer a special welcome to the survivors, students and musicians joining us this evening. We are especially honoured to be hearing from Virginie Ingabire this evening. She survived the genocide and will share her remarkable story with us. The resilience displayed by her and her fellow survivors continues to inspire. We honour them all.

Rwanda has made important progress towards a more peaceful and just society. I encourage the people and Government of Rwanda to continue promoting the inclusive spirit necessary for healing and reconciliation. The United Nations is strongly committed to learning the lessons of Rwanda and helping the international community to prevent future tragedies.

My Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide monitors the world for signs of the crime's known precursors. The "responsibility to protect" has taken its place as a new global principle. We are strengthening our capacities for mediation, fact-finding, preventive diplomacy and the peaceful settlement of disputes. We are focusing on the special procedures and other United Nations human rights mechanisms, which play a critical early warning role. And we are promoting tolerance and mutual understanding, including through the Alliance of Civilizations initiative.

We have also made tremendous strides against impunity. Suspected genocidaires and other would-be criminals around the world now know that they will be held accountable before the International Criminal Court, international tribunals or domestic courts. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, with the cooperation of Rwanda and other States, continues to prosecute people for their alleged responsibility in the genocide. I encourage the international community to expedite the arrest and prosecution of the remaining fugitives who perpetrated the genocide in Rwanda.

International criminal justice is a testament to our collective determination to confront the most heinous crimes. However, the international community has to do more to prevent atrocities, as the worsening catastrophe in Syria starkly demonstrates.

Human protection, human security, human dignity — these are shared responsibilities. Collectively, as a human family, we must go beyond words and effectively safeguard people at risk. States must uphold their obligations under international law, in particular international human rights law, to prevent abuses and protect their populations from genocide and other crimes.

Individually, we must speak out forcefully whenever communities are threatened by mass atrocities, and condemn crimes when they are committed. And we must never forget the victims — and make sure they receive the support they deserve.

Only by meeting these challenges can we truly honour the memory of those who died so brutally and so senselessly in Rwanda 19 years ago.

* * * * *

For information media • not an official record