

My fellow Rwandan, this week, the Rwanda People's Party celebrates the fourth anniversary of its founding with the goal of promoting reconciliation and bringing the desired democratic political changes longed for by all Rwandan people for the past 55 years. This anniversary also falls at the 20-year memorial of the 1994 genocide during which an estimated 1,000,050 ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed, a tragic event in our history.

Fellow Rwandan and Friends of Rwanda, on our Fourth Anniversary; personally and on behalf of the RPP, I would like to thank those who have devoted themselves in support of the party. We are pleased to inform you that we will be relocating the RPP to Rwanda in the very near future with the hope of a resounding victory in the 2017 presidential elections and a new chapter in the political history of our country.

The RPP sets itself apart from other parties by its determination to seek peaceful political change. The RPP denounces all violence and seeks change through the simple one man one vote electoral ballot allowing the people of Rwanda the opportunity to choose between a troubled past and a bright future.

This is our pledge to the Rwandan people - the RPP has an undisputable programme, unmatched qualities, and focused incorruptible leadership and as such will work diligently to demonstrate to the people of Rwanda that we have the answers to their critical questions. The RPP supports a nation and citizenry that respects the rights of its people and values them as equals; and is committed to policies that benefit the people of Rwanda. The RPP is confident this is the foundation from which we can go forward and win the 2017 election.

The Party believes a national conciliation among the Rwandan people is the only way to build a better Rwanda; a country where we can live alongside one another in peace and tranquillity. Together we can form a new Rwanda based on the people's rights and the values of Rwandans - one nation and one people rather than fragmented and artificial ethnic groups being used as catalysts and tools of hate.

Fellow Rwandan, the RPP issued the Rwanda Road Map to Peace in 2011. The RPP is committed to a political dialogue as the means to lasting peace, and social, political, and

economic development to benefit all Rwandan. This does not mean that concessions will be taken with groups or individuals accused of crimes against humanity and genocide; that

harbour hate, racism, and ethnic political ideologies all of which are detrimental to our country and our people. We believe peacetalks of this nature is non-productive and would not offer a viable solution. Indeed it is not beneficial to our country and people.

The RPP believes that the FDLR is composed of Rwandan people who have the right to live and enjoy all benefits accorded to every Rwandan. Much Rwandan blood has been shed and many Rwandan have suffered and mourned their lost loved ones as the result of senseless wars. The RPP believes that even one Rwandan killed is one too many and to this extent the RPP welcomes the disarmament of the FDLR as the group surrenders its arsenals to MONUSCO AND SADEC on May 30, 2014. We are confident that the FDLR surrender will help facilitate regional political, social and economic stability.

Today Rwanda has over 75,000 refugees still living in the forests of the DRC and refugee camps in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia, and others. Their children die of hunger and starvation; they have no access to medication, healthcare, education, or drinking water. We know our fellow Rwandan desire to return home, but are being discouraged by non-government organizations (NGOs), foreign journalists, and Rwandan politicians who are exploiting the pain and suffering of innocent Rwandan refugees purely for financial and personal gain. We condemn these behaviours of exploitation as dishonourable and unacceptable.

The RPP calls on all Rwandan refugees to return home and join their countrymen in rebuilding their homeland. The RPP pledges to continue working towards the peaceful return of all Rwandan refugees.

We regret Rwandan felt they had to resort to war in 1990, as this tragedy could have been avoided had previous regimes shouldered their responsibility allowing Rwandan refugees to return peacefully. There can never be any apology for the forcible return of Rwandan refugees to their homeland in 1990. The responsibility for this catastrophic war is in the hands of the genocidal regime of late Habyarimana and his cell.

Fellow Rwandan, RPP believes the major difficulty of our country stems from the privileged

elites' belief that they are above the law and are not accountable. These Rwandan desire a state in which laws allow the most powerful and privileged Rwandan to oppress and violate the rights and dignity of the most innocent, defenceless, and downtrodden Rwandans. The RPP will continue to seek equitable laws which protect the most vulnerable citizens from the oppression of the most powerful. The RPP will continue to strive for a nation built on the foundation of the rule of law and justice for all people.

Despite being members of the opposition, we believe the current Rwandan social and economic policy is pointing in the right direction. Rwanda's financial policies are probably some of the best in the world – well-implemented, monitored, and utilized to benefit the Rwandan people. At present Rwanda is a major economy in East Africa. It has security and stability following the tragic genocide. Rwanda also boasts a secure food supply as well as education and healthcare for all. These achievements are due to the lessons learned from our past.

The RPP will support and maintain these effective policies and further expand upon them on winning the 2017 elections.

On the other hand, Rwanda has a poor political record, including parties with no viable political opposition. There is an urgent need for political reform, in particular electoral reform. The current electoral laws do not benefit the people; but produce lame, incompetent legislatures only accountable to political leaders, not the people. The presidential term needs to be reduced from two seven-year terms to two five-year terms. The limited 18 day presidential campaign period is not conducive to a healthy and competitive election process and should be reformed to a minimum of 90 days to allow candidates to fully present their programme to the people, allowing them time to make an informed decision. In order to achieve balanced representation; presidential and parliamentary elections should be held on the same day to create a healthy parliamentary consensus. Electoral law reform should allow an independent and non-partisan electoral commission body which includes all parties. Political reform should establish a new voice in Rwanda to increase political competitiveness and enhance democracy. The RPP will continue to work toward these critical changes.

The RPP supports the M23 decisions to lay down their arms and seek a peaceful negotiated resolution as the only means to productively address their political grievances. The M23 act was a laudable, quiet act of courage. We have no doubt that the D.R.C. will respond positively in implementing the Kampala and the Nairobi peace accord.

On May 24, 2014, we were saddened by the news that one Rwandan peacekeeper was killed and two others injured in Darfur, Sudan (by the people who they were attempting to help) while

intervening to stop feudal tensions between tribal groups. Our deepest condolences go out to the families, friends, and the Rwandan people in this tragic loss. The RPP wishes a speedy recovery to those who remain hospitalised.

This event clearly defines the danger faced by Rwandan Peacekeepers. We believe while the duty carries danger; the danger does not outweigh the important work and obligations placed upon the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) to participate in international peacekeeping missions, to bring peace and stability to the region, to offer humanitarian assistance to those in need, and to continue training to preserve the peace. The RPP believes the RDF peacekeeping mission must continue regardless of the danger.

The RDF maintains more than 4,000 soldiers and nearly 600 police officers and personnel participating in peacekeeping operations including the International Support Mission in Central Africa Republic (Misca), Unamid, UNMISS, UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (Minusma) and the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (Unisfa). Their work is often praised as exemplary.

Fellow Rwandan, let us applaud the heroism, peacekeeping culture and discipline displayed by members of the RDF, in their missions around the world. Their resilience has shown the world that Rwanda is no longer a nation of hate, fear, terror, and genocide; but rather a nation of hope and inspiration, a people united by the will to learn from past events, and rise as a nation and people from the ashes to become a global inspiration of hope and peace to all bruised nations and peoples; nations like the C.A.R., Haiti, Darfur, Liberia etc..

The RPP welcomes the cease fire agreement between South Sudan President, Mr. Kiir and Mr. Machar, making way for an immediate cease of hostilities, opening humanitarian corridors, forming the coalition government of national unity, and returning refugees to their homes. We fear the war may escalate to genocide if no cessation of hostiles is enforced. We deplore the loss of life and sufferings of the South Sudanese refugees. The RPP supports the South Sudan Road Map to Peace toward finding a lasting resolution to end the conflict.

The RPP appeals for the immediate, unconditional release of the Nigerian schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram; yet another heart-breaking development in the region and a wake-up call to the African people. We stand shoulder to shoulder with parents and friends of the kidnapped schoolgirls and the good people of Nigeria during this crisis.

Fellow Rwandan, the tragic moments of 1994 still beat in our minds as does the terrible tragedy faced by the people of C.A.R., the tragic terrorist attack of Kenya's Nairobi Westgate Mall, the conflicts in South Sudan and Mali, the political turmoil engulfing Libya and Egypt, and the questions of the DRC and Somali's refugees are all an inconceivable mark on Africa and her people. Unless, we as Africans can arrive at a regional solution to prevent future tragedies without having to beg and wait for outside support; the future of our region and Africa as whole are in jeopardy. The RPP calls for the establishment of the Regional Rapid Crisis and Disasters Intervention Force to deal with both human and natural catastrophic events in our region.

The RPP fully supports the courageous efforts by the "Coalition of Willing" to build self-sustaining social, economic, and political prosperity in the region. The RPP believes there can never be political and social stability without economic self-sustaining stability. The RPP believes the stumbling block to African democracy is dependence on external aid. In developed countries, democracies work because nations are self-reliant; both economically and socially, self-funded, and backed by their internally self-generated revenues.

Fellow Rwandan, there is no doubt the price for building a self-sustaining regional economy will be enormous, and require extraordinary sacrifices, however, the end result will be well worth it.

The RPP supports the Northern Corridor Projects aimed at attaining regional development which include political and economic unions, single travel visas, national identity cards, single currencies, defence and security, air space management, railway construction, power generation and much more in the East African community. The RPP calls upon the Rwandan government to take the lead by allowing stable neighbouring currencies to be circulated with the Rwandan Franc.

The RPP welcomes the Nairobi railway (Standard Gauge Railway) agreement signed between Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and the President of Kenya on behalf of the "Coalition of Willing."

The railway line will link Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Burundi enhancing regional trade and services. There is no doubt that with the Northern Corridor Project, the railway is a step closer to regional economic and communication integration.

Fellow Rwandan, let us not forget to thank the Friends of Rwanda, for their good will to stand with us and our country during extraordinary moments of conflict and challenge. The RPP thanks the Friends of Rwanda for their courageous acts on behalf of the people of Rwanda.

Fellow Rwandan, we are encouraged that the majority of you have not let a few morally deprived people lead you astray. You have shined for Rwanda with the spirit of brotherhood. We call upon you to continue to resolve our differences in peace. Much blood had been shed and the law will continue to work to bring the perpetrators to justice.

During our fourth year, we pledge that we will continue to be an instrument in fostering justice, peace, social, and political reform in Rwanda. The Party will support policies that benefit our people. We will leave no stone unturned in our quest for pursuing a non-violent democratic change through one man one vote.

Fellow Rwandan, this is a journey of sacrifice that demands the shouldering of all our brothers and sisters.

Fellow Rwandan and Friends of Rwanda, once again, we thank you all.

John V Karuranga, President

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