

Speech by Deputy Director General of Operations Mr Themba Camane on behalf of the Minister of Public Works during the commemoration of the Rwanda Genocide held in Pretoria on April 07 2006

Excellency Ambassador Mr. James Kimonyo (Ambassador of Rwanda to the Republic of South Africa)

The Dean of the Diplomatic Corp

Excellencies Ambassadors

Heads of International Organisations

Members of the Rwandan Community in South Africa

Distinguished Guests

It is a pleasure and an honour for South Africa again to be part of commemorations of the Genocide that took place in Rwanda in 1994. I believe today is an opportunity for us all to reflect on the well known tragic events, but it is principally an opportunity to ensure that the world never again experiences the pains of Rwanda and apartheid South Africa.

In very significant ways, our political histories have traveled along similar trajectories, albeit at different times and varying scale. In South Africa particularly in the 1980s, leading to elections in 1994, we witnessed what was easily the most violent period of our political life as a country. In our situation thousands died when friends and blood relatives turned on each other in a blind feat of rage fuelled by irrational anger towards the outside world. In our own version of the age of impunity women, the old, children and the disabled were not spared from the marauding bands of attackers who descended on townships by night to leave a trail of death and destruction when morning broke.

The world knows today what we did not know then, that Rwanda in a matter of days like a man gone mad turned on its women, the old, children and the disabled that April 1994 and the months to follow. In Rwanda itself, military styled killing machines arose from the bushes of the rural hinterland to unleash untold violence on a nation that like the rest of Africa had never enjoyed long periods of peace. And so it is that we gather today to commemorate a tragedy that remains one

of the greatest blots in the recent history of humankind and not just of Africa.

That a thousand people lay dead at the end of the killing spree of the state sponsored militias in South Africa in the late 1980's and before, does not diminish from the fact that elsewhere, in Rwanda, a million or more people lay dead at the end of the skirmish. As President Thabo Mbeki has said before, in Rwanda as in apartheid, we see examples of the unimaginable depths to which humanity can descend in order to find cause to violently dispose of its fellow human beings.

Like in Rwanda, in South Africa cultural and physical characteristics were dusted up from the cabinets of race-based pseudo science and deployed as the weapon of choice during the train and hostel attacks. So the violence in the Reef was often incorrectly portrayed as a war between Zulu migrant workers and the Xhosas. In Rwanda the Genocide was also incorrectly characterized purely as a Hutu-Tutsi conflict.

We know today, what we did not know then, that it is impossible to have a tragedy the size of Rwanda's take place in broad daylight and in the dead of night with such swiftness without the assistance or acquiescence of an outside force.

We know today, what we did not know then, that in South Africa the so-called black on black violence was in fact allowed to continue for so long because it favoured those who were in power at the time. Together - Rwanda and South Africa - we learned the hard way that it takes the silence of a few good men and women for tragedies of such proportion to thrive. We vow again today that this will never happen again!

None of us on this continent suffered the terrible genocide that you did. Therefore, we must succeed in overcoming the legacy which led to that genocide and all the things that led to the apartheid crime against humanity. And, as we do those things together, Rwanda and South Africa will have something positive to give to the rest of the world.

In seeking to deal with our own apartheid past we in South Africa went the way of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The process opened up old wounds in order that we would know the full extent of the atrocities. We deliberately opened these wounds, because we found that millions had believed the apartheid propaganda that Black people were intrinsically sub-human. With the TRC they saw for the first time how evil the system of apartheid was. We support you in the manner in which you have chosen to deal with this unprecedented genocide. It is a tragedy for which humanity as a whole stands guilty as charged even for allowing it to happen.

As President Thabo Mbeki has said before, in our case it has been difficult to see how we could achieve reconciliation without transformation. Our transformation has of necessity had to deal with racial divisions but it also must address poverty and the racial disparities in the wealth distribution and income. It also deals with gender discrimination which severely disadvantaged black women and we have now accorded all languages and different cultures an equal status. We believe it is important to deal with these once and for all because we never again want to return to that place where these can be exploited to divide and destroy our nation.

In collaboration with the Rwandese government and through multilateral institutions we continue to contribute to lasting peace in Rwanda and the Great Lakes region. We have a Joint Bilateral Commission which we established in 2000 and a Joint Commission of Cooperation (JCC) through which we seek to strengthen relations between our two countries on a more structured basis.

During a JCC held in Kigali in December 2002 we made significant progress towards implementing special focus plans on training and development, and gender mainstreaming. Our respective Home Affairs Ministers have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with specific reference to a number of issues. This includes co-operation on immigration, refugee and nationality issues; human trafficking; establishment and use of movement control systems; management of data, technical systems and products; training in network security and programming languages. These we believe are going a long way towards further strengthening our relations.

The above are underpinned by the solid diplomatic relations we established to facilitate contact at the highest political level as early as February 1995. Flowing from such high level contact we have among others concluded several agreements between our two countries in the area of bilateral air transport, protection and promotion of bilateral investments, health, tax evasion and security.

We consolidated our security relations when in July 2004 our defence ministers signed agreements on training, capacity building and transformation in that area. Rwandan students have over the years studied at South African tertiary institutions under our bilateral agreement on education.

A trilateral agreement between the governments of South Africa, Cuba and Rwanda on health co-operation, funded by South Africa's African Renaissance Fund facilitated the implementation of a programme whereby Cuban medical practitioners train medical personnel in Rwanda.

We continue to seek ways to increase the value of our trade so it begins to reflect more balance over time imports. Our private sector entities such as cell-phone operators have set up ventures and investment in Rwanda. We agree that there remains ample room for expansion in trade and economic relations between South Africa and Rwanda going forward. Today we commit ourselves as the government of the Republic of South Africa that we will never abandon the people of Rwanda and we will do everything to ensure that the conditions which led to the genocide are completely obliterated in Rwanda and everywhere else in the world.

As South Africa implements the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (Asgisa), Africa, including Rwanda, is implementing major economic development plans under Nepad. This is to ensure the stability of democracy in our continent by addressing such issues as poverty and the infrastructure backlog. At the same time under the African Union we will actively support the African Peer Review Mechanism which holds all our governments accountable. We must of necessity do more today than we did yesterday. In that way our yesterdays will be a thing of the past as we look forward to a

future in which all our children live an economically and politically secure life.

To conclude, I have spoken about the issues above to illustrate that our countries are living proof it is possible to fashion from the depths of death and despair, an Age of Hope. Indeed, we are gathered today to ensure that as Nelson Mandela told us that: "Never and Never Again, Shall it be that this beautiful land shall again experience the oppression of one by another". Never again! God Bless Africa!