**Statement by H.E. Olivier Jean Patrick NDUHUNGIREHE, Ambassador of Rwanda to Luxembourg, at the 23rd commemoration of the genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi**

Luxembourg, 27 April 2017

Madam Luisella Moreschi, Honorary Consul of Rwanda to Luxembourg;

Excellencies Ambassadors, Honorary Consuls and representatives of diplomatic missions accredited to Luxembourg;

Father Pierre Habarurema and Cyrille Uwukuli Ngulinzira,

Dear genocide survivors, fellow compatriots;

Distinguished guests, friends of Rwanda;

1. At the outset, I would like to express my gratitude to all of you for taking of your time to attend this 23rd Commemoration of the Genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi in Rwanda. I thank our Honorary Consul for organizing this ceremony in Luxembourg. To Father Pierre and Cyrille, thank you for your moving testimonies. You survived to tell and your country will always be your family.

2. We are gathered, here in this room, not only to commemorate a crime - the genocide -, but most importantly to remember and comfort the victims of that crime. As I always say, our compassion can never be sincere if we claim to commemorate “a Rwandan genocide” or “a genocide in Rwanda”, without naming the victims – the Tutsi - who were targeted as such. Indeed, we commemorate in Rwanda the “genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi” and we call upon the international community to use the right terminology, as established by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and recognized by the United Nations (UN).

3. As we remember the Tutsi who were killed for who they were, we also pay tribute to other Rwandans, righteous among our nation, who were killed because they opposed the genocide or protected their Tutsi compatriots. One of them is Boniface Ngulinzira, the father of Cyrille. He was a man of extraordinary calm and vision. Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Ngulinzira was the main architect of the Arusha Peace Accord, and was killed by the army, abandoned by UN peacekeepers.

4. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to Captain Mbaye Diagne of Senegal, member of the UN Mission to Rwanda (UNAMIR), who alone saved up to a thousand Rwandans during the genocide, before falling in the line of duty. I also salute the ten (10) Belgian peacekeepers killed on the very first day of the genocide, protecting former Prime Minister, Agathe Uwilingiyimana, also killed by the then Rwandan army.

5. Let me say that it would have been our preference not to have days like these when we remember one million souls slain in a hundred days of horror. We cannot turn back the hands of time to undo the sins of the past; but we must, however, always remember the genocide against the Tutsi, fight genocide ideology and build on our progress, as per the theme of this 23rd commemoration.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

6. Twenty-three years ago, Rwanda collapsed, destroyed by the cruel hand of its citizens, by the genocide ideology of its leaders and by the indifference or complicity of the international community. Today, Rwanda is reborn from ashes, built by the resolve and efforts of its people, by the vision of its leaders and by the support of the international community.

7. Twenty-three years ago, Rwanda was flooded. Flooded in the blood of victims and in the tears of survivors, during a hundred rainy days. Today, Rwanda emerged from troubled waters and is rather drenched by the sweat of its citizens, who are rebuilding the country they had lost.

8. Twenty-three years ago, Rwanda was soiled. Soiled by dead bodies, strewed all over our streets, schools, churches and rivers, and soiled by hatred in our hearts. Today, Rwanda is clean and pure. Clean in its cities and its vision, pure in the minds and hearts of its children, aspiring for a better future.

9. Twenty-three years ago, Rwandan women were sexually assaulted and enslaved. Today, they are empowered and show the way to the world in gender representation in the Parliament and in gender equality.

10. Twenty-three years ago, doctors and nurses were killing patients in our hospitals and health centers; teachers were killing students in our schools and universities. Today, universal healthcare and a universal 12-years basic education are a reality in Rwanda.

11. Twenty-three years ago, Tutsi and other persecuted Rwandans were abandoned; abandoned by their own government and security forces, abandoned by the United Nations and the international community as a whole. Today, Rwanda has decided not to abandon peoples under threat of extermination, as it is now committed to prevent and fight against genocide and other mass atrocities, through its participation in peacekeeping operations, its support to the “Kigali principles on protection of civilians” and through its continued commitment to the responsibility to protect.

Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs,

12. Le Luxembourg, pays ami du Rwanda, a toujours manifesté sa solidarité envers le peuple rwandais et a toujours été aux avant-postes quand il s’agit de promouvoir le principe de la « Responsabilité de Protéger » (R2P), les « Principes de Kigali pour la protection des civils », la protection des enfants dans les conflits armés, ainsi que la lutte contre l’impunité. Je peux personnellement en témoigner, car je servais à New York la période pendant laquelle le Rwanda siégeait, avec le Luxembourg, au Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies.

13. Le 7 avril 2014, lors de la 20ème commémoration du génocide perpétré contre les Tutsi, Jean Asselborn, Ministre des affaires étrangères et européennes du Luxembourg, a fait le déplacement à Kigali pour rendre hommage aux victimes du génocide. Le 16 avril de la même année, le Luxembourg, alors membre non-permanent du Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies, a été co-auteur de la résolution 2150 introduite par le Rwanda. Cette résolution demande aux États Membres des Nations Unies de s’engager à nouveau à prévenir et à combattre le génocide et les autres crimes graves de droit international, et souligne qu’il importe de tirer les leçons du génocide perpétré contre les Tutsis au Rwanda.

14. Lors de l’adoption de cette résolution, Madame Sylvie Lucas, alors Représentante Permanente du Luxembourg auprès des Nations Unies, a déclaré : « Que ce moment de réflexion et de douleur soit aussi un moment d’inspiration à l’action. Nous devons agir pour prévenir le génocide, les crimes contre l’humanité et les crimes de guerre. Que ce soit pour la Syrie, le Soudan du Sud ou la République centrafricaine, nous devons tout faire pour que le Conseil de sécurité soit à la hauteur de ses responsabilités. Notre objectif doit être de traduire l’impératif moral du « Plus jamais ça! » en action concrète. La résolution 2150 (2014) préparée par le Rwanda et que nous avons adoptée à l’unanimité ce matin nous y encourage. Faisons-le pour honorer la mémoire des victimes du passé et pour préserver les générations futures du fléau du génocide ».

Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs,

15. C’est avec cet appel vibrant du Luxembourg à l’action de la communauté internationale pour prévenir et combattre le génocide, un appel à préserver la mémoire des victimes et à préserver les générations futures du fléau du génocide, que je conclue mon propos.

16. Je vous remercie.