

REMARKS BY RT HON NGOGA KAROLI MARTIN AT THE OCCASSION OF THE NATIONAL HEROES DAY, FEB 1ST, 2018

**Excellencies the Ambassadors and High Commissioners,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;**

I wish to start by expressing our sincere thanks to Rwanda High Commission, Kampala for the invitation to come and cerebrate with you this memorable day of our National Heroes Day. The Rwanda's 24th National Heroes Day theme is **"Uphold the Heroism, to Build the Rwanda We Want"**.

The Heroes Day we are cerebrating today was occasioned by the determination to restore peace, dignity, full rights and hope to all citizens. After decades of misrule that culminated in the tragedy of the genocide against the Tutsi in 1994, which left a humanitarian catastrophe, and a country in conditions of a near failed state which left many thinking that Rwanda would never survive as a nation. This was a result of the Pre – Liberation bad policies of the successive regimes that preached hate, and promoted divisionism, discrimination, denial of fundamental and other rights to its citizens.

Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Where Rwanda has reached on the journey of Heroes Day is evident to all Rwandans and others who care to see. The lives of the citizens have been greatly transformed for the better because of policies designed to uplift the lives of Rwandan.

It is gratifying to note that, under the leadership of H.E Paul Kagame and as we celebrate the 24th National Heroes Day, Rwanda is a unified Country, focused on a clear path to development and prosperity for all. From 1994, when the gallant sons and daughters of Rwanda stopped the genocide, Rwanda has transcended the tragic history having gone through a successful long journey of recovery, reconciliation and working towards prosperity for all.

Rwanda has been transformed in every positive way, and every Rwandan can tell you where the country is headed and why because of the clear vision that involves all citizens as beneficiaries. Because of unified effort for self-improvement, great achievements have been registered in building the economy, strengthening participatory governance, maintaining security and upholding national unity and dignity. President Kagame continuously reminds us, to maintain dignity and unity, striving for self-reliance and the

right to make own choices, achieving prosperity and protecting the gains made so far, constitutes a continuous struggle.

The progress made so far and the great aspirations the Rwandans have about their country required reforms on all aspects of public life and involving all citizenry. These successes resulting from these efforts and the aspirations of the people must be guarded jealously with commitment and determination.

“Heroism is about improving and changing lives of the people. It’s about the progress of the nation and what we are celebrating today are not just names but the actions of these people and what they symbolize for the Nation

“Today we remember our heroes but as we celebrate, there is more than just remembering our known heroes. It is important to bear in mind where we are going and where we have come from as a country.

February 1 is a day to remember the names of the Heroes, but also how each one of them can be a hero through advocating for those same principles they died for.

We should dedicate ourselves to uphold what we have achieved for a better tomorrow like the ‘Unknown Soldier’, one of the Heroes celebrated on the day.

The celebrated heroes had different achievements and lived at different times but what they had in common is the patriotism and love they had for their country.

The students in Nyange were named national Heroes following an attack on their school in 1997 by militias who wanted them to divide themselves according to their ethnic affiliations, but they refused, which led to their deaths.

Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

We salute the Rwandan heroic values of nation building. These are critical in achieving the desire to break away from the dependency syndrome that has for many years affected the region and the continent at large, it can only be dealt with if only Africans began to have self-reliance and respect, rather than depending on handouts from the donors, as long as the continent remains dependent on handouts, it will remain difficult for it to progress and will even get worse if those ‘offering’ help decide to close the tap.

It's high time African moved out of the concept of living 'cheaply' just for the sake of living, and shift to higher standards by adopting a culture of accepting only the best and ignoring what is bad for the country and themselves.

The need to work together as Africans has always been pressing, and we now have more reason than ever to reinforce our solidarity.

Our continent is young, dynamic, and growing fast. Africa already plays an active and positive role in global affairs.

The solutions for our biggest challenges are right here, in Africa. They always have been, only that we were conditioned, and sometimes forced, to rely on others with their own interests.

We need a youthful population that is zealous of harnessing opportunities and fully aware of the challenges. To achieve this, all efforts should be made to add value to this vital human resource, by providing quality education, and building a culture of working hard and smarter and enhance creativity. We need to significantly increase the mass of people equipped with relevant knowledge and technology to exploit and add value to the massive resources endowed to our continent to solve the "Paradox" of an abundantly resourced Africa that has not transformed economically to enable the inhabitants' quality of life

The generation of the young has everything it takes to make our continent what it should be.

H.E Paul Kagame, who has been at the forefront in spearheading youth empowerment said;

"We are proud Rwandans. But our pride should be backed up by action. Don't congratulate yourself too much. Just feel proud that you stood up for yourself and be ready to do it whenever it comes up", the youth should take time to define themselves as opposed to waiting for someone else to come and define them and should stand up against injustice.

"The first right is the right to be the one you want to be, and the rest will take shape around this. This will affect what we want our nation to be. If you want short cuts, you will not realize fully what you want to be; it's about the quality of what you want to be. "Have the courage to say no, this is not for me, this is not where I belong. I reject it. Just like young people got together and rejected injustice and being stateless forever.

Therefore, it is no small matter that the youth represent a wealth of ideas and perspectives, and they have a critical role to play in building a better continent.

Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Special efforts must be directed in managing our diversity and deepening national cohesion and consensus. This means always striving to nurture a good and productive politics, in keeping with our respective situations and historical contexts.

In the region and the continent of Africa, our diversity should be a source of vitality and dynamism. It is up to each one of us to contribute to this African character, one that is confident, at peace with itself, and open to partnership with the wider world.

Ultimately, we should be responsible for our own security and well-being. No one will hand these to us, for free.

We must accelerate the East African integration, both economic, political. Trade and investment, we must stay united and collaborate closely on the things that have the most impact on the lives of our people. Solidarity gives us the means to tackle these challenges more effectively, rather than as individual countries with less leverage.

I congratulate H.E Paul Kagame on his accession as chairman of the assembly and spearheading the African Union reform which aims to make our continental organization more focused, effective, and financially sustainable. This is critically important, for Africa's future.

I am happy to note, that twenty countries, including Rwanda, have already begun to implement the new 0.2 per cent levy on eligible imports to finance African Union programs.

This measure is designed to make the African Union less dependent on external partners, and more attuned to the interests and priorities that Africa has defined for itself.

A better organized African Union will allow for more mutually beneficial partnerships between Africa and other parts of the world. The African Union agenda on self-financing should inspire the East African Community to follow suit. Under the African Union reform agenda, most roles have been devolved to the regional economic bloc. That comes with the immediate challenge for our own bloc to undergo necessary reforms with a view of supporting the AU agenda and accelerating our own path to full integration.

We must do the right things to seize the opportunities presented by globalization. This means investing in the capacities of our people, especially our youth, through education and information technology, so that Africans compete effectively in the knowledge industries that drive prosperity.

Acquiring a mindset for success and ownership doesn't require money, but it is the most important condition for transforming our continent.

We already have the means and ability to do so, right here in Africa, and it is our responsibility.

Our leaders are constantly reminding us that integration is critical to achieve prosperity and strategic security and a stable environment for doing business.

Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

In conclusion, let me quote President Paul Kagame's speech at Opening Ceremony of 30th African Union Summit Addis Ababa, 28 January 2018;

"No country or region can manage on its own. We must be functional, and we must stay together. The financial and institutional reform of the African Union derives all its urgency from these realities. Africa has assets and strengths to build on, starting with this organization, and its tangible commitment to unity. This is an advantage, which no other region of the world possesses, in such abundance. Unity must be our starting point, as we do the necessary work of re-defining our plans and ambitions".

I wish to thank you all for your kind attention, and once again Happy Heroes Day.

Thank You.