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REPUBLIC OF RWANDA



PERMANENT MISSION OF RWANDA

GENEVA

22nd SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Statement by

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Ambassador and Permanent Representative

Item 3:

Cluster interactive dialogue with the special rapporteur on adequate housing

Mission to Rwanda

Geneva, 4 March 2013

Thank you Mr President

1. Let me thank the Special rapporteur for the presentation of her report. The Government of Rwanda welcomed her visit to Rwanda following our invitation and as we have stated previously, we remain firmly committed to cooperating with all the Human Rights Councils' special procedures and mechanisms.

Mr. President,

2. The special rapporteur rightly recognises the specific and unique historical and geopolitical context of post-genocide Rwanda. It is that context and specifically the exclusion that characterised the past that informs current Rwanda's policymakers as they seek to realise the goals set out in our comprehensive development strategy, the Vision 2020 whose pillars are anchored on inclusiveness and participation of all Rwandans.

Secondly, the special rapporteur acknowledges the tremendous progress Rwanda has achieved in combating poverty and improving the living conditions of all Rwandans. Indeed, the recently concluded third Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey (EICV 3) - *which provides information on changes in the well-being of the population such as poverty, inequality, employment, living conditions, education, health and housing conditions* - indicated that Rwanda had reduced

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the number of people living in poverty by 1 million from 2006 to 2011.

3. However, a number of challenges remain particularly poverty and demographic pressure. The government and people of Rwanda remain resolutely committed to meeting these challenges through a combination of homegrown solutions and nationally owned policies with international obligations and standards.

Mr. President, Madam Special Rapporteur,

4. The visit of the special rapporteur provides us with an opportunity to reflect as we continue to improve the living standards of Rwandans. A number of the special rapporteurs recommendations will be considered in the context of reviews and reforms currently underway. The law on expropriation for public interest and the law on land are under review and currently before parliament.

The evaluation of the imidugudu program was also recommended by the Rwandan Senate (*with a view to improve its implementation*) will commence shortly.

They are other recommendations that would benefit from an extended visit by the special rapporteur to enable her to interact with a broader spectrum of stakeholders and better appreciate the context. She will be able to see the benefits of decentralized decision-making, ownership and participation in programs at the grassroots level. It is because of this inclusive

approach that Rwanda is where it is today. Yes, the pace is fast but it is necessary, we are far from where we would like to be. As one Pan Africanist put it, "**where others are in hurry we have to run**".

Mr. President,

5. Allow me to make a few additional remarks on the report. The *imidugudu* policy (that replaced scattered settlements) seeks to provide improved housing and living conditions and deliver social services and infrastructure to the population. *The special rapporteur had the opportunity to visit the model **umudugudu** village and was able to see how the living conditions of the population had significantly improved. The implementation of the **imidugudu** policy is on a voluntary and participatory basis. We recognise that not all the **imidugudu** have the necessary infrastructure, however, the government is committed to ensuring that all necessary infrastructure is in place and improvements are consistently being made. It is also important to note that the model village is the standard for the **imidugudu** and all local authorities are expected to adhere to this. The **imidugudu** have not only led to increased efficiency but have also fostered greater ownership and contributed to reconciliation among communities.*
6. Bye bye *nyakatsi* or elimination of thatched houses 'Nyakatsi' is part of Rwanda's' community development and social welfare programs. The campaign aims at allowing Rwandans in

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extreme poverty access to a decent home and enabling the Government to reorganize rural settlements for social and economic transformation. Like the **imidugudu** policy, **bye bye nyakatsi** was implemented through a consultative and participatory process. The Rwandan government is well aware that the definition decent housing is not solely based on the type of material used to make the roof. In that regard we would invite the special rapporteur to spend more time in Rwanda and further look into the broad benefits of these programs before drawing any conclusions that may be viewed as based on conjecture.

7. **Land registration and land titling programme** has been carried out in an open, inclusive and transparent process. Participation at all levels is inclusive with the local community adjudication committees (**Abunzi**) particularly active at the grass-roots level. The government of Rwanda is committed to ensuring the most efficient and productive use of land. Currently a landowner with a title deed can use it to access financial services such as mortgages and small business loans.

The land consolidation policy allows farmers to benefit from various services such as efficient delivery of inputs, improved seeds, fertilizers, proximity extension services, post harvest handling and storage facilities. It is designed to ensure this happens through a consultative and participatory process that is informed by our broader development strategy.

8. The urban challenges facing the city of Kigali are largely the legacy of an unplanned settlement and the challenges that face most modern day cities. The Kigali City master plan seeks to address these challenges and is being executed in line with the laws in place.
9. The improvement of the living conditions and standards of historically marginalised groups is a key priority of the government of Rwanda. The government has put in place several programs and initiatives to promote the social and economic development of these groups. Programs like the **imidugudu** and **bye bye nyakatsi, one cow per family**, stand to be of most benefit to these historically marginalised groups.
10. The government of Rwanda's commitment is to all its citizens. The rights to free speech and voluntary participation are not only enshrined in the constitution and law but are actively enjoyed and utilized. Consultative meetings are institutionalized and are carried out at the cell level after Umuganda (or community works for public interest) every last Saturday of the month. The special rapporteurs observations in the context of her mandate are wholly inaccurate. The people of Rwanda have participated in government programs out of there own free will and those that have chosen not to have done so without consequence. Any claim of self-censorship would be self-imposed.

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Whenever there is conflict, Legal remedy is available to all and at all levels without barriers to economic status or otherwise.

11. In conclusion, Mr. President, we take note of the recommendations contained in the special rapporteurs report and assure you that the government of Rwanda will consider them carefully. We look forward to your next visit Madam special rapporteur.

I thank you for your kind attention