

**PERMANENT MISSION OF RWANDA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**



STATEMENT

BY

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AT THE

HIGH LEVEL EVENT ON THE FUTURE OF CIVILIAN PROTECTION IN
PEACE OPERATIONS: ENDORSING AND IMPLEMENTING THE KIGALI
PRINCIPLES

As delivered

NEW YORK, MAY 11, 2016

President of the General Assembly Mogens Lykketoft,

Honorable Ministers,

Our distinguished panelists,

Distinguished Delegates,

It is an honor to be with you today for this one-of-a-kind event that allows us to reaffirm our commitment to protecting civilians in armed conflict through the endorsement of the Kigali Principles.

I first would like to welcome my co-chair, H.E Bert Koenders. Foreign Affairs Minister of the Netherlands. Thank you very much for your commitment to these principles, from the active engagement of your Permanent Representative, Karl to yourself. Your past experience leading the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali undoubtedly provide us with an important partner who grasps fully the essence of the Kigali Principles and its importance when we talk about bringing peacekeeping into the 21st Century.

We have a special opportunity today to shape the future of UN peacekeeping by adhering to 18 principles that hold our efforts to the highest standards as troop and police contributing countries, as peacekeepers, as mission leadership and as protection of civilian stakeholders. The failures of our past should not dictate our future but rather should inform us of what we can do better.

The 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda blatantly took the lives of over a million Rwandans and impressed upon us the conviction that we must take every measure necessary to secure the lives of civilians. This conviction coupled with our history fueled our desire to contribute to peacekeeping in a profound way. We currently have over 6,000 troops and police serving in numerous peacekeeping missions and we aspire to contribute even more.

Our troops and police live by the guiding words of these Kigali Principles. They receive extensive pre-deployment training on the protection of civilians, believe in identifying threats to civilians, are

prepared to use force when necessary and consistent with the mandate, and possess an unwavering determination to deliver on their responsibility to thoroughly protect.

Almost a year after the inception of the Kigali Principles, we have troop and police contributing countries from different regions of the world endorsing them. I thank the following countries for their resolute commitment to protecting the lives of civilians: Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Italy, Netherlands, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Uganda, and Uruguay whom have been with us since the very beginning, and the new endorsements by **Austria, Belgium, Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Estonia, Finland, Ghana, Guinea, Ireland, Malawi, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden, Ukraine, the United States and Zambia.**

Dear Colleagues,

The reality is that conflicts are escalating in number and changing in nature at levels and speeds that are unprecedented. We must meet these

challenges head on by adapting and modernizing our ways of old. This includes having robust and proactive peacekeeping that closes the gaps on what is asked of us to protect civilians and what we actually provide. What is most at stake is not our reputation or the legacy we intend to leave behind but rather the lives of those civilians that have involuntarily been absorbed in conflicts and wars that have taken their loved ones, endangered their lives and stolen their livelihood.

The report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations and the subsequent report of the Secretary-General called for meeting the needs on the ground to proactively and effectively protect civilians. The Kigali Principles answer these calls and they seek accountability for the way forward. Just earlier this year, the Kigali Principles were included in the C-34 Report for the 2016 substantive session, a growing testament to their relevance.

But more can be done.

The UN, the body that brought us together in 1945 to secure peace and security for all generations to come, has an essential role to play in advancing the principles.

It can assist us in invoking the principles in all the areas in which they are vital to, from the pre-deployment training standards the UN enforces to the materialization of a rapid deployment component that can swiftly aid the UN when a crisis hits.

The Secretary-General's endorsement of the principles can contribute to further institutionalize the principles, leading the charge towards a Secretariat that can deliver on operational standby and rapid deployment arrangements that meet at least the 30 day target for a traditional mission, and 90 day target for a complex mission.

The Kigali Principles can also enforce the numerous policies and frameworks the Office of Military Affairs and other similar departments are supplying to troop contributing countries to better guide their efforts

on the ground. As H.E. President Paul Kagame has poignantly stated, we must ensure that the “*necessity to protect civilians does not get lost in ideological debates,*” which are void of action and do nothing to save lives.

I therefore ask those member states present here today that have not endorsed the principles to deeply consider them and their contribution to peacekeeping. Lets commit to making a difference on the field and fulfill the implementation of the protection of civilian mandates we have been tasked with. At very core of our efforts is one fundamental task: the protection of any and all civilians.

The way forward must be guided by a collective effort from each of us that strengthens our present peacekeeping efforts and sets the foundation for future pursuits of peace and security.

Dear Colleagues,

Today, we have the opportunity to write a narrative that matches our innate desire to save the lives of those civilians entangled in armed conflict. Ambassador Samantha Power has been writing the pages of this narrative, working fervently to secure the United States' support for these principles. She has witnessed first hand the terrible plight civilians continue to endure and felt at the most profound levels the responsibility to do more to better protect the civilians when she went to the Central African Republic, to Mali and to the Democratic Republic of Congo. Her unrelenting leadership in advancing the protection of civilians has made us all reexamine our own contributions to peacekeeping and fortified the important role peacekeepers play in protecting civilians and keeping peace at the same time. Ambassador Power, thank you for your tireless efforts, your invaluable contribution to these principles does not go unnoticed.

I would also like to thank the experts that have worked day in and day out to seeing the materialization of these principles unfold. Thank you Gideon Maltz from the US Mission, my own team at the Mission from

Col Vincent Nyakarundi to his successor , Lt. Col Raoul Bazatoha; and Col Nortbert Moerkens, and Eran Nagan from the Netherland Mission for all your hard work and through you all the to other colleagues who have been involved in this process. You have been the impetus for the growing endorsement of these principles.

Dear Colleagues,

Let us leave here today with an even deeper conviction for saving lives and an equally profound understanding that what we choose to do or not does affect distant lands and unfamiliar faces that have far too often paid the highest cost in today's conflicts. Join us in crafting a future that puts the lives of all civilians at the core of our efforts.