

Remarks to the African Union - on the 28th Commemoration of the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda at the African Union Commission on 7th April 2022.

Mr. Chairperson,

Distinguished Members of the Peace and Security Council,

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to address you today, and appreciate the invitation extended to me, on this solemn occasion in commemoration of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, during which a million people were deliberately and systematically killed in less than three months. My mandate as Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, is global. I raise awareness of the causes and dynamics of genocide, alert relevant actors where there is a risk of genocide, and advocate and mobilize for appropriate action.

Last year, my first year in office, I visited Rwanda to honor and pay respect to the victims and survivors of the Genocide.

We must never forget the victims and the survivors of the Genocide. We must honour each and every one of the victims, whose lives, hopes, dreams and aspirations were cut short by senseless violence that built upon explicit calls to destroy an entire group, based on who they were.

Honoring also means accepting our responsibilities. The commemoration of the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda will always remind us of our collective failure to prevent, in spite of clear signs of what was coming.

We failed to protect those innocent civilians because we failed to recognize the warning signs of impending violence.

Ladies and gentlemen, my Office is the United Nations focal point on hate speech. The United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech represents the commitment of the UN to address and counter hate speech globally. As we know, in my office, UN Strategy working definition of hate speech as “any kind of communication in speech, writing or behavior, including images, that is derogatory, pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group of persons, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, color, descent, or national or social origin, sex, age, disability, or other characteristics.”

In Rwanda, hate speech was there for all to hear; messages were communicated through whispers, ear to ear, but through megaphones, villas, and the airwaves. The Tutsi were dehumanized through hate speech.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

