

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

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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. 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), as mission leadership, 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 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 the Kigali Principles. They receive extensive pre-deployment training on the protection of civilians, believe in identifying threats to civilians, 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, Ghana, Guinea, Malawi, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Ukraine, United States, Zambia, Sweden, Ireland, and Finland.

Dear Colleagues,

The UN in particular has an essential role to play in advancing the principles, for their effective implementation must come from the body that brought us together in 1945 to secure peace and security for all generations to come. In aiding our efforts, the UN 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 assist in further institutionalizing the principles, guaranteeing that other organs of the UN, such as the Security Council, regularly heed the counsel of troop and police contributing countries in developing and renewing mission mandates, especially those tied to the protection of civilians. 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.

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. This also calls for the need to rid our missions of the sexual exploitation and abuse allegations that still plague our efforts. As one of the principles denotes, we must *"hold our personnel to the highest standards of conduct..."* and prosecute accordingly so that impunity does not mean immunity. Our peacekeepers have been entrusted with protecting the lives of civilians, so let us work together to sustain this expectation.

Dear Colleagues,

What is most at stake is not 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. I ask those member states present here today that have not endorsed the principles to deeply consider them and their contribution to peacekeeping, for at the very core of our efforts lies 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.

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 them. 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. 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, Col Vincent Nyakarundi, Col Raoul Bazatoha, Col Nortbert Moerkens, and Eran Nagan for all your hard work. You have been the impetus for the growing endorsement of these principles.

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. We ask those of you who have not endorsed the principles yet to join us in crafting a future that puts the lives of civilians at the core of our efforts.