

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT PAUL KAGAME DURING SUMMIT ON STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING

English

New York, 26 September 2014

I am very pleased to co-host this important and timely meeting, given what is happening around the world.

Rwanda's recent history informs our strong commitment to peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

From the time we started strongly the mission in Darfur in 2004, Rwanda has contributed over 36,000 military personnel in deployment and rotation, and 2,000 police officers, to 16 missions around the world.

Peacekeeping demands are increasing, both in quantity and complexity. To meet them effectively, we need to think about modernizing our approach. Three considerations, in particular, can bring us closer to this goal.

The first is speed of deployment. Getting trained and equipped peacekeepers on the ground promptly, makes all the difference.

Earlier this year, in partnership with the United States, Rwanda deployed a mechanized battalion to the Central African Republic, in less than a month. And we can even further improve that speed.

Secondly, when lives are at stake, nothing matters more than saving them. Protection of civilians should be the central purpose of peacekeeping.

Finally, it is important for peacekeepers to connect with the communities they serve. Doing so makes them better able to respond to outbreaks of violence, but more importantly to prevent them.

This helps to create an environment in which people can rebuild their lives, and work together to build a lasting peace.

We are encouraged by the momentum across Africa, notably the Eastern Africa Standby Force, which Rwanda currently chairs. The force will be operational this December, one year ahead of schedule, with a seven-day deployment readiness standard.

Additional support for this ready outfit makes the work and mission of much more attainable. All member states have pledged forces and equipment to the force, and a peace fund is being put in place to sustain it over the long term.

Rwanda welcomes the African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership. This new initiative by the United States will enhance our ability to rapidly deploy peacekeepers, where they are needed.

Rwanda is currently preparing to contribute additional helicopters to the Mission in South Sudan. We are also deploying another Formed Police Unit there, which will include a significant number of female officers.

Where needed, we stand ready to respond with additional infantry battalions, and force enablers, such as field hospitals.

Let me end with a call to speed up progress toward the commitments we have made. So long as peacekeeping is necessary, it should be timely, focused, and effective.

Working together, we can reach that point.