



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF REFLECTION ON THE 1994 GENOCIDE OF TUTSIS IN RWANDA - 7 APRIL 2017

MESSAGE FROM SCOTT M. WEBER, DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF INTERPEACE

For each year that goes by, the gravity of what came to pass on 7 April 1994 and the long months that followed sinks in a little deeper. No one knows this grief better than Rwandans themselves. On this solemn day, Interpeace stands with the Rwandan people in solidarity and joins them in commemoration.

Twenty-three years after the Genocide of Tutsis, research on contemporary Rwandan society demonstrates that it remains among the most traumatized societies in the world. Moreover, there are alarming levels of intergenerational trauma transmission affecting young people not yet born when the atrocities took place.

While violence can be swift, overcoming its legacy can take generations.

Rwanda in 1994 held a mirror to the conscience of humanity. It confronted us with the depths of our capacity to do evil to one another and with the shame of our failure to stop a mass atrocity we knew was taking place.

The United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, has already rung the warning bell with visits to South Sudan and the Central African Republic. He has also expressed concerns over situations in other countries.

The United States and Switzerland have established mechanisms for analysis and coordination to prevent mass atrocities, and this is also happening at the United Nations level under the leadership of its new Secretary-General, António Guterres.

Yet, as a global community, can the world really say that it is better prepared to prevent genocide from happening today than it was 23 years ago?

Why is it always too early before it is too late?

Yes, we all need to improve our ability to react when the fire has started. That said, the focus must shift from better response to better prevention, and thus work at a much earlier stage. We need to ask ourselves how we can help societies at risk build resilience to violence and violent conflict. That means greater attention to the

institutions, societal relationships and trust that are necessary to resolve conflict in non-violent ways and to address the roots of violence in local communities.

In that vein, I would like to express my immense respect and appreciation for the contribution of Interpeace's local partner, Never Again Rwanda, to fostering trust, tolerance and inclusion in communities throughout the country. These elements are crucial for dealing both with the trauma of the past and preparing for new challenges in the future.

The effort to build peace is never over. We continue to learn how to help build peaceful and inclusive societies, and the experiences of Rwanda are among the foremost lessons in this respect.

Much as the scientific community has a responsibility to share its research findings widely for the betterment of humanity, so too should the peacebuilding community share its lessons freely. The stakes are too high not to seek to deepen our common understanding of what works and what does not work in the promotion of greater social, political and economic inclusion.

It is our privilege to work with Rwandans as they overcome the legacy of their traumatic past and carve a better future for themselves. We are humbled by the determination that they bring to that task every day and will do our utmost at Interpeace to share their lessons and stories of courage with the rest of the world.

In solidarity,



Scott M. Weber
Director-General
Interpeace