

Remarks by His Excellency Paul KAGAME, President of the Republic of Rwanda at the Nelson Mandela Foundation's Promise of Leadership Dialogue, 20 March 2009, Johannesburg, South Africa

- ✚ Excellencies;**
- ✚ Mr. Nelson Mandela, Founder of the Nelson Mandela Foundation;**
- ✚ Mrs. Graca Machel;**
- ✚ Mr Tokyo Sexwale and Mrs. Irene Menell, Trustees to the Nelson Mandela Foundation;**
- ✚ Hon Uhuru Kenyatta, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Republic of Kenya;**
- ✚ Hon Arthur Mutambara, Deputy Prime Minister, Republic of Zimbabwe;**
- ✚ Mr Achmat Dangor, CEO of the Nelson Mandela Foundation;**
- ✚ Founding Members and Fellows of the Africa Leadership Initiative;**
- ✚ Corporate, government and Civil Society leaders;**
- ✚ Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Thank you very much Mr Sexwale – I greatly appreciate your introductory remarks on leadership, along with the gracious hospitality extended to us by the founder, trustees and management of the Nelson Mandela Foundation.

Allow me to express my sincere gratitude for the opportunity to be here to exchange views with this distinguished assembly of corporate, government and civil society leaders on how we are

addressing our development challenges in Africa and Rwanda in particular.

I am especially honoured to address this “Promise of Leadership Dialogue” made possible by the Nelson Mandela Foundation - an institution that bears the name of a man whose remarkable experience as a freedom fighter and exemplary African leader inspires millions of people world-wide.

We appreciate very much the fact that the Promise of Leadership Dialogue is pan-African - incorporating among others the Africa Leadership Initiative.

As we continue to steer our continent onto a more productive path, let us emulate the legacy of peace, reconciliation and people-centred development associated with Madiba.

** Excellencies;
 Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Turning to Rwanda our efforts of nation building should be contextualized within the broader historical and other circumstances and continental quest for effective leadership to galvanize, nurture, and challenge ourselves African people to build healthier, skilled and economically prosperous societies.

As we all know, this experience has been characterized by considerable success in recent years but has also met with significant disappointment over the last century.

Fortunately, significant and positive changes on our continent continue to be realised – a process that gathered momentum in the 1990s as illustrated, for example, by the defeat of the apartheid system and the rise of a society and leadership committed to reconciliation, democracy and development in this great country of South Africa in 1994.

The same year saw Rwandans put an end to the ideology of, and genocide itself – setting in motion a national agenda for ending

years of conflict, sectarianism, and mass exile of sections of the Rwandan society.

Africa continues to consolidate the political and socio-economic gains of our recent past, despite occasional setbacks.

Most African countries have experienced improved economic growth, and increased business by African companies across different sectors such as IT and telecoms, service industry, tourism, banking, agriculture and mining.

There is no doubt that African business leaders are playing a critical role in creating wealth across the continent, and to a much larger scale than experienced previously, which is accompanied by the rise of modern legal and financial infrastructure to enable them to operate.

Consider, for example, the rapid expansion of Africa's capital markets, increasingly attracting international equity and venture capitalists – previously averse to investing on our continent.

We are pleased to see, and do appreciate the leadership of corporate Africa that are here with us today.

Additionally, our trade and investment partnerships are extending beyond the traditional Western markets – in particular, Chinese and Indian investment and trade with Africa have reached record levels, which should be pursued further and strengthened.

We are hopeful that the current global financial crisis will not reverse these considerable achievements.

 Distinguished Audience;

I must emphasize, however, that overall our continent is still not where it should be.

Africa is endowed with enormous human and material potential but remains a region and people trapped in poverty, hunger and disease – and endlessly seen as a place for pity and charity. It is a situation to be confronted head on.

It is the inability to transform the vast latent wealth of this great continent into real prosperity that places Africa in the difficult position of resorting to never ending development aid. Ironically, Africa is at a development stage where more aid – not less is required to confront continued socioeconomic difficulties.

But this is also the time for serious questioning and thinking about the future without aid.

This is the fundamental challenge for African leadership – to use African resilience and external support to create conditions for enabling our continent to end dependency which erodes our dignity and self-worth.

It is my view that more African voices need to be heard in this debate – it is time that we delink the survival of our continent from aid by using it properly to create a solid base and preconditions for a future without it.

I am certain that many of our people believe that aid should only serve as a temporary bridge to fill a shortfall or play a vital role in mitigating emergencies – but it cannot become a long

term substitute for business, investment, innovation and hard work.

There is no reason why Africans cannot ably stand on our own feet and solve the development challenges facing us just like the rest of world.

**✚ Excellencies;
✚ Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Let us look more closely at our situation in Rwanda.

The challenging but rewarding process of nation building in the last fifteen years has roots in our liberation struggle in which our strategy for developing leadership had at least five key features.

First, we reasoned that a leadership able to successfully transform our society had to be inclusive in order to tap into the energy and ideas of our people – all of them.

This was the essential means of encouraging broader citizen participation and ensuring that Rwandans had a real stake in their country.

Second, we had a vision and a framework in which to carry out the socio-economic transformation of our country.

This therefore added another dimension – our liberation was not just an armed struggle or an exercise to simply remove bad governments.

It was also about ensuring improved quality of life of our otherwise impoverished nation.

We therefore envisaged a better Rwanda with greater productive capacity based on its primary assets – its people, and secondarily, its material resources.

Third, we had a proper ideological mindset and purpose – we refused to accept a defeatist attitude that the bad conditions of our country were somehow inevitable.

We had to demystify the notion that Rwanda and Africa are pre-determined to remain unproductive appendages to the world economy.

Furthermore, we could not have accepted that the purpose of leadership is self-aggrandizement, and refused to uphold the politics of entitlement.

We built on our understanding that leadership and politics meant problem-solving, service delivery and hard work to improve peoples' lives.

Fourth, we learnt from effective decentralization – a leadership standing apart or above society would not become part of the people it sought to serve; nor would it foster different levels of empowered cadres in conceiving appropriate solutions for communities' needs.

Finally, the leadership had to be regularly assessed for its performance in terms of discharging its responsibilities and accountability towards delivering the earlier stated vision. In this respect, innovative and creative ideas in developing solutions were subject to open debate and appreciation, while poor performance was, at least, not rewarded.

 **Distinguished audience**

 **Dear Friends;**

Our country's challenges in the last decade and half have been the incorporation of these core values into our everyday practice to improve Rwandan lives.

I am pleased to say, however, that good progress has been made - and, if I may, let me to share a few examples to illustrate this.

Putting into practice the concepts of broad-based leadership and an inclusive political process in our country begun immediately with the post-genocide Government of National Unity.

Eight political parties formed the said unity government which successfully steered our country through the transitional phase in the mid-1990s up to 2003 when the new Rwandan constitution came into effect, thereby providing the basis for the first ever multi-party democratic elections.

Under the Government of National Unity's stewardship, peace and stability were established, and critical institutions such as those responsible for justice and reconciliation created.

This phase also provided us with the opportunity and time to develop the key leadership values referred to earlier – which included inclusive debate related to the history and the future of our country from which we were able to define a shared vision.

In that vision we agreed to undertake modernisation of our economy and raise our country to a middle income level in a span of twenty years.

I am pleased to note that we are progressing well – and that considerable value has been added by Rwanda’s entry and participation in the East African Community.

In realising these modest accomplishments, Rwanda has benefited from considerable external support – which as noted earlier is crucial but should be steadily reduced and replaced by domestic efforts as our productive capacities increase.

In this respect, we continue to reduce the external support to our budget from a high level of almost one hundred percent in the immediate post-genocide phase to forty five percent at present.

 **Distinguished Audience;**

Another example of building a shared leadership in our country is demonstrated by the impact of the 2003 Rwandan Constitution that retained the core values of political inclusiveness.

Key innovations in our Constitution include the fact that the branches of government should be held by different political parties.

Even in the executive branch, fifty percent of the cabinet ministers are appointed from political parties other than the ruling party.

To reverse the effects of past exclusion of women, their participation in national decision-making institutions begins from a threshold of thirty percent from which they can increase their role through competition.

Currently women form fifty six percent in parliament including the Speaker, and fifty percent in the Supreme Court, including the Chief Justice.

Evidently, Rwanda still faces many challenges – not least in terms of skilled human resources for executing our socio-economic policies and development vision.

That notwithstanding, there are significant strides towards instituting the core values for an inclusive and decentralized leadership to serve the development of our people.

** Dear friends and colleagues;
 Distinguished Audience.**

Let me conclude by commending and congratulating the Nelson Mandela Foundation for providing an invaluable opportunity for corporate, government and civil society leaders from around the continent to reflect on our collective future.

We can expect only high quality advice and practical solutions from this prominent gathering of leaders, aimed at helping our continent remain focused on our ambitious but achievable vision of Africa free from poverty and conflict.

I wish you productive discussions – and look forward to our continued engagement so that we can use insights, thoughts

and ideas derived from this important exercise to improve African lives.

I THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION