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Secretary-General

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SECRETARY-GENERAL, IN MESSAGE FOR COMMEMORATION OF RWANDA GENOCIDE, STRESSES

NEED TO GO BEYOND WORDS IN SAFEGUARDING PEOPLE AT RISK

Following is UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message for the commemoration of the genocide in Rwanda, to be observed on 7 April:

On the nineteenth anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda, we remember the more than 800,000 innocent people who lost their lives; we honour the survivors whose resilience continues to inspire; and we commend those — all too few, tragically — who came to the defence of their fellow human beings.

Out of the ashes of the genocide, Rwanda has forged a new path, progressing towards a more peaceful and just society. I encourage the people and Government of Rwanda to continue promoting the inclusive spirit and dialogue necessary for healing, reconciliation and reconstruction.

The United Nations works every day to learn the lessons of Rwanda and to prevent any recurrence of such horror. My Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide monitors the world for signs of potential problems. The “responsibility to protect” has taken its place as a new global principle. We are strengthening our capacities for mediation, fact-finding, preventive diplomacy and the peaceful settlement of disputes. And we are focusing on the special procedures and other United Nations human rights mechanisms, which play a critical early-warning role.

We have also made tremendous strides against impunity. Suspected *genocidaires* and other would-be criminals around the world now know that they will be held accountable before the International Criminal Court, other international tribunals or domestic courts. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda continues to deliver justice, with the cooperation of Rwanda and other States. International criminal justice is a testament to our collective determination to confront the most heinous crimes. The new age of accountability is real.

Preventing genocide is a shared responsibility. States must uphold their obligations under international law to prevent abuses and protect their populations. Collectively, we must go beyond words and effectively safeguard people at risk. And individually, we must nurture the courage to care — and the resolve to act. Only by meeting these challenges can we match the resolve of the survivors and truly honour the memory of those who died in Rwanda 19 years ago.

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