

RWANDA NATIONAL CONGRESS



RWANDA: PATHWAY TO PEACEFUL CHANGE

DECLARATION OF CORE VALUES, GOALS AND AN AGENDA FOR A NEW RWANDA

DECEMBER 2010

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I. Introduction and Background

All human beings are entitled to an inherent right to live in peace and freedom and to the fair use of, and access to, the resources with which their nations are endowed for the promotion of the well-being of all citizens of that nation. Every person is entitled to the rights promulgated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and other international conventions that explicitly ensure the freedom of thought, association, and religion for all humankind. The principal rationale for the existence of government is to facilitate the realization of these fundamental and inalienable rights for all citizens.

Rwanda is an ancient nation. No doubt, every government that has exercised control over the Rwanda state during the course of our country's long history can rightfully be credited for some developments that have been of benefit to its citizens. On balance, however, virtually every Rwandan government has historically preyed on the citizenry and has suppressed realization and enjoyment of the inherent and universal rights of those whom they governed. For most of our country's history, our people have not had the opportunity to fully realize their aspirations for freedom, security, and prosperity. Rwanda was one of the first countries in post independence Africa to become a one party state. Autocratic government (in the form of a government controlled by an absolute monarch or an all-powerful president) has generally been the norm. Elites in control of the state resorted to repression to perpetuate their monopoly of power

Rwanda has long been, and remains, one of the world's poorest nations and the gap between rich and poor has grown wider with the passage of time. Rwandan society has long been deeply divided by cleavages based on class, ethnicity and region. Post independence adopted policies that institutionalized discrimination based on ethnicity and region. These cleavages have been exploited by elites competing for political power and access to resources and have often led to cataclysmic conflict and indescribable human suffering, particularly over the last five decades.

The founders of the Rwanda National Congress (RNC) hold the unshakable view that Rwanda belongs to all Rwandans – Hutu, Tutsi and Twa equally – and that freedom, justice, peace and economic and social development are inextricably linked. We also share the firm belief that Rwandan society has not learned the necessary lessons from the traumatic events of the country's recent past; that the threat of new and deadly conflict looms large over the country's future; that only profound change – rooted in popular aspirations for freedom, peace and material well-being – can avert the looming crisis; and that the current ruling government, far from working to address the issues that so severely threaten the very survival of the nation, adamantly refuses to acknowledge the necessity for fundamental political change.

This interim policy document, adopted at the meeting of the founders of the Rwanda National Congress (December 11 – 12, 2010), underscores the:

- Factors that make reform of Rwanda's political and economic system imperative
- Vision of the future of our motherland that the RNC espouses
- Values that must underpin Rwanda's political transformation
- Goals and objectives of the struggle for which the RNC seeks to mobilize the people of Rwanda
- Strategies by which the RNC intends to make freedom, peace and economic and social development a reality in every citizen's life as a cornerstone of the realization of the full range of our people's inherent human rights

II. On the Need for Profound Political Reform in Rwanda

In the early 1990s, Rwanda stood poised on the eve of a momentous experiment with democracy. Under pressure from internal political opposition, the armed rebellion of the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) and pressure from development partners, Rwanda embarked on a delicate process of political transition. The government of the day was compelled to open political space to opposition political parties, to share political power with the opposition in a coalition government, and to conclude a peace agreement (the Arusha Peace Agreement) with the RPF. The terms of the agreement committed the parties to undertake certain governance reforms, to share power during a 22-month transition period and to organize free and fair elections at the end of the transition period. The implementation of the peace agreement was, however, frustrated by various Rwandan domestic stakeholders, and was subsequently derailed by the beginning of the tragic genocide that befell our nation.

The war and genocide was brought to an end by the RPF's military victory, which, upon assuming control of government in 1994, promised to re-launch the process of transition to democracy. Regrettably, the promised transition to democracy has failed to materialize. On the contrary, Rwanda is now far less free than it was prior to the outbreak of the genocide. President Paul Kagame has converted both the RPF and the Rwandese Patriotic Army – now the Rwanda Defence Forces (RDF) – into instruments for sustaining his personal and absolute control of the state. Indeed, due to President Kagame's maneuvering, the entire political system, despite the false and misleading appearance of a multi-party democracy, does not, in fact or deed, provide any real or meaningful opportunity for political participation or political opposition.

The country's laws make it impossible for individuals and organizations, other than the RPF, to participate meaningfully in politics. Rwanda holds regular elections, but their outcomes are pre-determined, as political groups are not allowed to obtain legal status,

nor compete for power on an equal footing with the ruling party. The so-called “opposition political parties” that participate in the RPF-dominated government do not have any power or influence within the government. They are tolerated for the purpose of lending a false legitimacy to the government by giving the appearance of political plurality and competition.

Rwanda is today a de facto one-party dictatorship dominated by a presidency that absolutely controls all other branches of government. The people of Rwanda do not have any opportunities for meaningful political participation and cannot exercise their fundamental right to choose and change government. Further, the political system does not provide opportunity for checks and balances, which is a prerequisite for a thriving democracy.

The Rwandan government is not accountable to the people of Rwanda. The entire machinery of government is controlled by the Head of State, Mr. Paul Kagame. The legislature is nominated, not elected, even within the RPF. Virtually all of its members belong to the ruling party, which serves as a reliable rubber stamp for the executive. The judiciary lacks independence. Power is concentrated in the hands of a small group of officials answerable only to the President, who control all institutions of the state from behind the scenes. The RPF has used restrictions on debate relating to the issue of identity in order to prevent discussion of policies, which serves to marginalize the majority of Rwandans from meaningful political participation.

The RPF and Paul Kagame maintain their monopoly of political power by means of repressive laws, unfair and illegal administrative practices, and violence against the citizens of Rwanda. Administrative, law enforcement, judicial and security institutions are regularly used to suppress the exercise of fundamental human rights of Rwandan citizens. Draconian restrictions limit the ability of civil society, including the media, to hold government accountable. The government uses the security services to persecute opponents and critics of the government. Elements of the security services regularly resort to illegal detentions, politically-motivated prosecutions, imprisonment on trumped-up charges of opponents and critics, enforced kidnappings and disappearances, and extra-judicial killings and other forms of violence to maintain President Kagame’s monopoly of political power.

President Kagame justifies these draconian and wide-ranging restrictions on the exercise of civil and political rights on the grounds that the rules the government has set, and actions it has taken, are necessary to prevent the manipulation of ethnicity and the recurrence of genocide. The real motives for these restrictions, are self-evident, namely, to insulate the RPF from political competition and to entrench President Kagame’s absolute rule for the foreseeable future.

As a result of the limitations that the RPF imposes on the right of other political forces to organize and advocate their policies freely, Rwanda’s government lacks popular

legitimacy. The government's failure to be embraced and supported by its citizens has implications for peace and stability, particularly since the current government is not only repressive, but it is also perceived as a minority regime led by Tutsis at the expense of Hutus, who represent the majority ethnic group in our nation. In reality, the state is controlled by a small group of military officers and a few civilians who do not represent or enjoy the support of the Tutsi community.

Furthermore, citizens lack security – a monumental failure on the part of the current government, inasmuch as security must be an over-riding responsibility for any government. Instead, the Rwandan state continues to be prone to violence. Government institutions, especially the Presidency and the security services, inspire fear rather than confidence in the population. Impunity for human rights abuses by agents of the government is rampant and is the norm in present-day Rwanda – all in contravention of internationally-recognized human rights afforded to its citizens.

Citizens, especially the rural poor, continue to suffer from endemic poverty. Communities in rural areas have benefited little from the Kigali-based economic recovery that Rwanda has experienced since the end of the war and genocide in 1994. The government's policy of settling citizens in group villages (imidugudu) has evaporated people's capital, as well as their investment in their farms and homes. The land reform process and consolidating of land holdings that the government has undertaken deprives the poorer citizens of Rwanda of access to land for farming, which is their only livelihood.

Domestic enterprise and entrepreneurship have also been stifled due to the government's failed policies. Indeed, the private sector has been captured and overtaken by the RPF ruling party which has become the country's dominant business conglomerate. Rwanda's economy is monopolized by the RPF and its foreign partners and allies. The RPF's monopoly of access to capital and business opportunities stifles the growth of private enterprise and entrepreneurship, augments social, economic and political inequity, and foments resentment that will only lead to new conflict. Repressive government policies and endemic conflict have further reduced social capital. Reservoirs of mutual trust and confidence, solidarity and empathy are unacceptably and dangerously low in present-day Rwanda.

In spite of the traumatic experiences that the people of Rwanda have experienced, they still share common aspirations to live in peace, free from fear of becoming victims of power struggles among contending elites. Rwandans are eager to work for their sustenance and to meet their own needs, including the proper education of their children. They long to live in a country whose growth is focused on ensuring that every individual, family and community has equal opportunity to access healthcare, work, or land for farming. Our people yearn to live in freedom, in a state that honors their inherent right to human dignity, protects their fundamental rights (especially to property), and allows them to attain self-fulfillment.

Rwanda's recovery from the ravages of war and genocide has been remarkable. However, the progress that Rwanda has made in reconstruction and development after 1994 are not sustainable. Lack of freedom is the most critical obstacle to the achievement of our people's dreams and aspirations. Freedom is the ultimate expression of human dignity and equality. Freedom is essential for human happiness and well-being. Freedom is a pre-requisite for peace and sustainable development, manifested by freedom of expression, association and choice.

In present-day Rwanda, the following intolerable situation exists:

- The monopoly of political power by a group with a narrow political base
- The denial of space for political participation to individuals and political groups who are not members of the RPF
- The marginalization of the majority of the population from genuine power-sharing
- The use of violence and other forms of persecution and fear to suppress attempts to exercise or claim fundamental and universal rights
- Deep and widening polarization of society
- Widespread and worsening poverty, especially among the rural population
- Increasing disparities between the rich and poor
- An endemic problem of refugees
- Armed insurgency by groups based in the Democratic Republic of Congo

These all portend violent conflict in years to come. As such, Rwanda needs profound and systemic political reform immediately in order to avert the risk of violent conflict – conflict that, we fear, will be of catastrophic proportions.

III. Our Vision

We, the founders of the Rwanda National Congress, hereby proclaim our vision for a new Rwanda:

Rwanda will be a united, democratic, and prosperous nation inhabited by free citizens with harmonious and safe communities who will live together in peace, dignity and mutual respect, regardless of ethnic or other differences, within a democracy governed according to universal principles of human rights and the rule of law.

IV. Our Core Values

The Rwanda National Congress attributes the problems of bad governance, deep social cleavages, and violent conflict that Rwanda has recently experienced, to the absence of sound values and adherence to the rights afforded all human beings pursuant to international conventions. The RNC firmly believes that political change in Rwanda must be grounded in the following core values:

- Human dignity and respect for human rights
- Equality and non-discrimination
- Mutual respect
- Democracy and the rule of law
- Integrity
- Empathy
- Solidarity
- Patriotism
- Right and responsibility to hold leaders accountable
- Accountable leadership
- Truth
- Justice and fairness
- Inclusion and embracing and celebrating diversity
- Tolerance

V. Our Goals

The Rwanda National Congress proposes the following goals for the political transformation of Rwanda:

- Freedom
- Unity
- Security and peace
- Prosperity

VI. Our Objectives

The objectives of the Rwanda National Congress are to:

1. Stop and prevent violent conflict, including genocide and grave human rights violations that Rwanda's people have periodically suffered and that have historically extended to citizens – men, women, and children – of neighboring states
2. Eradicate a culture of impunity for human rights violations

3. Create a conducive and progressive environment for social and economic development for all the people of Rwanda
4. Establish, nurture and institutionalize democratic governance, particularly the rule of law in all its aspects
5. Establish independent, non-partisan, professional civil service and security institutions
6. Build a stable society that promotes and protects equality, embraces and celebrates diversity, and fosters inclusion in all aspects of national life
7. Promote individual, community and national reconciliation and healing
8. Promote harmonious relations, reconciliation and mutually-beneficial collaboration with the peoples and governments of neighboring states
9. Resolve the chronic problem of Rwandan refugees
10. Nurture a culture of tolerance to diverse ideas, freedom of discussion and debate of critical issues

VII. Our Thirteen Strategies

The Rwanda National Congress proposes the following 13 strategies for moving Rwanda towards achieving the goals for the social, economic, and political transformation we envision for Rwanda's future.

1. Mobilizing the People of Rwanda to Unite in the Struggle Against Dictatorship

The most critical strategy for promoting freedom in Rwanda is to mobilize our people to unite and work together to assert their claim to the full range of universal human rights. Our struggle for freedom is constrained by sectarian and ideological cleavages that divide and weaken our capacity to hold our political leaders accountable. The position of the RNC on conflict in Rwandan society is that our people do not harbor any fundamental differences that cannot be resolved by peaceful means. The horrendous violence and suffering that Rwanda has experienced have always been masterminded and organized by political leaders as a strategy for strengthening their grip onto power. Political leaders and groups have fuelled sectarian divisions merely to cover-up their plans to monopolize political power.

Unfortunately, the victims of what have essentially been struggles between political elites for power and access to resources have been the people themselves. However, although political leaders bear responsibility for creating and fuelling conflict in our society, it is still undeniable that conflict (grounded in experiences of social, economic and political exclusion, as well as marginalization and violence) has left our people deeply traumatized and divided, especially along lines of ethnicity and region.

The transformation of Rwanda into the peaceful and stable society, for which our people crave, can only be realized to the extent that our society is able to overcome and transcend the legacy of fear, mistrust and hatred that sectarian violence and political discord have created. Our people's aspirations for freedom, democracy and sustainable peace can only be truly realized if the fissures that divide us are healed, and when our collective potential is single-mindedly harnessed to fight and end dictatorial rule to usher in a new era of freedom and peace in our motherland.

The Rwanda National Congress will prioritize the challenge of mobilization of the people of Rwanda over every other strategy for seeking the realization of freedom in our nation. We believe the following essential elements constitute the strategy for mobilization of the people of Rwanda to engage in the struggle for the establishment of democracy and lasting peace:

- Exposing the anti-democratic and anti-peace character and actions of Rwanda's current government
- Educating the public about the full range of fundamental human rights to which every citizen is entitled, in general, and the right of political participation, in particular
- Empowering individuals, communities and societal groups to assert or claim their rights
- Fostering collaboration and dialogue with other groups, wherever they may be located, and work with them to advance and establish democratic change in Rwanda

2. The Need for a Transitional Government

The RPF government of Rwanda seeks to dominate Rwanda's politics through undemocratic means. The RPF does not appear to have any interest in permitting democracy to be established in Rwanda. Under these circumstances, the political transformation for Rwanda can only be realized through the work of a democratic transitional government in which representatives of divergent political forces (including opposition parties), along with the RPF, have an equal opportunity for participation to determine the future of Rwanda. The establishment of an inclusive transition democratic government to lead the dismantling of the existing dictatorship is a pre-requisite for resolution of the political crisis that Rwanda faces. The proposed transition government would have responsibility for carrying out the reforms necessary to ensure a successful process of transition to democracy.

The reforms to make the transition to democracy credible will include:

- The unhindered ability by political parties to function freely
- Restoring freedom of the press
- Permitting civil society to perform its proper watch-dog role

- Disbanding informal security networks that currently serve to persecute opponents of the regime
- Undertaking minimum reforms of the security sector institutions, including the RDF, Police, National Security Service, and prisons (part of the Army)

The transition government must also undertake needed reforms of the judicial and legislative branches. Further, a credible process of political reform will not be possible without a degree of separation of powers and checks and balances to ensure an even playing field for all players during the transition. In addition, the transition government will organize the voluntary return of Rwandan refugees to permit them to play an active part in shaping the processes of change that Rwandan society will have to agree upon with a view to ending the perpetual threat of violent conflict that continues to hover over our country and people.

3. The Imperative for National Dialogue

Rwanda remains a fractured nation that is yet to come to terms with its own history, both the good and the bad. The 1994 war and genocide were brought to an end by the outright military victory of the RPF. As a result of its military victory, the RPF has had unfettered discretion in all decisions relating to the reconstruction of post-genocide Rwanda. The RPF has not afforded other political parties or civil society meaningful opportunities for input or participation on major issues relating to planning for the collective future of our country.

Indeed, the default and common practice has been for the RPF to make decisions on issues affecting the future of the country and to, afterwards, inform the compliant political parties that remain part of the government. When the RPF has taken the trouble to consult other political parties, it has not seriously taken their views into account. Not only has the RPF failed to organize an honest debate about the country's past and future, it actively suppresses independent debate about major and fundamental issues that still divide Rwandan society. Instead, the RPF has sought to unilaterally impose its own understanding of the country's history and its vision of Rwanda's future upon the rest of Rwandan society.

The over-riding consideration behind all the decisions that the RPF has made during the time that it has been in control of government has been to protect and entrench its monopoly of political power. As a result, post-genocide Rwanda has not had the benefit of an open, inclusive national debate on the root causes of the political problems that the country has experienced, or on strategies for ensuring a peaceful and stable future for the nation. As a result of the RPF's unilateralist approach to the reconstruction of Rwanda in the aftermath of war and genocide – and its refusal to sanction or organize, an open, transparent and inclusive debate on the country's future – the government's initiatives to promote peace, national reconciliation and peace have largely failed. Rwanda remains deeply divided. The majority of the population feel excluded and

marginalized. As a result, armed rebellion still poses threats to the security of the country.

Feelings of mutual mistrust and fear continue to fester in Rwandan society. The middle-class that played a vital role in the country prior to the genocide largely remains in exile. While the majority of the Tutsi community is disenchanted and does not feel any sense of liberation and emancipation, the majority Hutu feel politically marginalized and excluded. For many Rwandans, the path of violent conflict appears to be the only option of making right the injustice, discrimination and abuse to which they feel subjected. Groups committed to the overthrow of the government remain active in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Internally, Rwanda is becoming increasingly unstable, particularly as a result of the evident break-down of cohesion within the RDF, which is evidenced by the defections of both former Ex-FAR and RDF officers, and imprisonment and purges of many senior military officers who remain in Rwanda. The nature of defections and purges that have affected the RDF provide an indication that the problems it faces cut across the board and do not exclusively affect the Hutu or Tutsi in the military.

In order to defuse the crisis that Rwanda is now facing, it remains necessary for Rwandan society to engage in honest dialogue about the causes of the problems that the country faces and the solutions to those problems. Rwanda cannot move beyond the current quagmire without an honest, inclusive and comprehensive debate on the many issues that drive conflict in the country. Some of the critical issues that such a dialogue could address (issues on which the RPF does not see eye-to-eye with its opponents and critics) include:

- Rwanda's history and the root causes of conflict in our society
- The issue of ethnicity
- The nature and causes of the conflicts that Rwandan society has experienced
- The state of political governance in Rwanda today
- Democratisation and apportionment of power and control of state institutions, especially the military and security services, in a newly-democratic Rwanda
- Strategies for promoting reconciliation and peace-building
- Protection of the minority from marginalization
- Mechanisms needed to prevent "tyranny of majorities"
- Exclusion in any post-transition political system
- Rwanda's relations with its neighbours

The RPF has, to date, resisted all calls for national dialogue on the problems that confront Rwandan society. It opposes such dialogue out of fear that the dialogue could lead to calls for it to open up space for political participation and to share or compete for political power more fairly with other political groups. Nevertheless, this kind of

dialogue remains indispensable as the only way of avoiding violent conflict that appears inevitable if the Kagame government cannot find a solution to the problems relating to governance that the country faces. National reconciliation and durable stability will remain elusive until Rwandan society can address these issues through a national dialogue and reach a consensus about how to deal with them.

Hence, there is a compelling need for the organization of a national dialogue about these and other issues. The dialogue must be transparent, inclusive and comprehensive. The outcome of such a proposed dialogue would be a grand compact or unifying agreement that would set the basis for continued collaboration in building a free, democratic and peaceful Rwanda.

4. The Necessity of Reform of the State

The Rwandan state has historically been strongly centralized and dominated by the Head of State, who to this day dominates all institutions of the state. Rwanda has never had a system of government where various branches of government exercise checks and balances upon one another. Rather, the Executive uses other branches of government to shield itself from accountability to the people and competition for political power. The establishment of democracy in Rwanda will require a profound reform of the state to make it accountable to the citizens of the nation and to take its position as a modern and democratic nation that respects the rule of law and the rights of its citizens.

5. Establishing a Constitutional and Legal Framework that Advances Freedom and Democracy

The RNC proposes that a new constitutional framework be established that will enable our people to live together in a society where conflicts are resolved peacefully and according to the rule of law. A new Constitution must reorganize the distribution of power between the various branches of government that would be established. The new constitutional order would be designed to enshrine the rule of law as the guiding tenet of political governance. The new constitutional framework should end the dominance of Rwanda's political system by a single individual and ensure a strong and stable system of checks and balances among the three major branches of government.

The RNC proposes the establishment of a parliamentary system of democracy. Under the constitutional system that the RNC proposes, the powers of the Office of the Head of State would be substantially curtailed. The President would not be involved in the day today management of the state. Day-to-day management of the affairs of government would be the responsibility of the Prime Minister who would be answerable to Parliament. The legislature and judiciary would be genuinely autonomous and not susceptible to manipulation by the executive generally, and the President in particular, as has hitherto been the case. The legislature would be reformed through reforms such

as giving citizens power to elect parliamentarians directly, establishing constituency-based parliamentary representation, and increasing Parliament's powers of oversight over the executive branch of government.

The judiciary, while being required to be accountable, would be protected from interference by the Executive. Judges would be given security of tenure, which they do not currently enjoy. Disciplinary proceedings against senior members of the judiciary would be independent. Members of the judicial system would be screened through an independent and non-partisan process, to remove judges and prosecutors who are corrupt, have been used by the current government to persecute and prosecute political opponents and critics of the regime, and who are otherwise unfit to exercise judicial and law enforcement functions on account of other professional misconduct.

6. *Reform of the Security Sector*

Dictatorships, in Rwanda and elsewhere, rely on the coercive machinery of the state to suppress citizens' aspirations for democracy. Similarly, President Kagame has turned the military and security institutions of Rwanda into instruments to promote and protect his personal financial and political interests. Rwanda's security institutions lack transparent management and democratic oversight. The military and security services are all controlled by President Kagame, his former body guards and personal assistants. The formal leaders of Rwanda's military structures often have no real power within the institutions they ostensibly lead. The command of military institutions is composed almost exclusively of members of President Kagame's inner circle and come from the Tutsi community, resulting in the exclusion of Rwanda's ethnic majority in the military and security services. Further, as Rwanda's government is essentially a military government with a façade of a democracy, Rwanda's military and security institutions do not have any civilian oversight.

President Kagame uses military and security institutions to prevent political groups other than the RPF to organize, recruit campaign or carry out activities to promote their policies and political agenda. Military and security institutions, instead of being used to guarantee the peace and security of the people, are abused and serve as instruments of repression and fear. The military and security institutions of the state enjoy impunity against human rights abuses, as these abuses are committed to keep President Kagame in power.

The military justice system of Rwanda does not meet the requirements for an independent and impartial tribunal established by law and bound by the rule of law. The system lacks the capacity and independence to ensure respect for fundamental human rights of both military personnel as well as civilian victims of human rights violations committed by state institutions. Currently, most military judges have no legal training; indeed, a large number of judges in the military justice system have minimum formal education. Military judges and prosecutors have no security of tenure and

members of the military personnel are themselves frequently victims of the shortcomings of the military justice system. Further, the military justice system is sometimes used to cover-up and hide crimes committed by military personnel for the purpose of persecuting the regime's political opponents. Reform of the security system is a prerequisite for democratization in Rwanda, as in other societies seeking political change.

The Rwanda National Congress advocates far-reaching reforms of the security sector, including the following:

- Ensuring democratic civilian (parliamentary as well executive) oversight over military and security institutions
- Ensuring collective management of military and security sector institutions through establishment of a National Security Council responsible for determining national security and defence policy; and making appointments and promotions in the military and security services proposing appointments to senior positions in the military and security services that require Parliamentary approval
- Ensuring fair representation of all communities in the military and security services, including at all levels of command
- Integration into the armed forces of members of exiled armed groups who are not responsible for, or linked to, genocide or other gross human rights violations
- Dismantling the informal security networks that are used by the current government to frustrate the exercise of fundamental freedoms
- Screening-out and removing persons responsible for gross human rights abuses from the Rwanda Defences Forces
- Strict prohibition of military, police and security services involvement in partisan politics
- Prohibition of the army and security services from carrying out law enforcement functions, other than in exceptional circumstances approved by Parliament
- Professionalizing the military justice system to ensure that judges are independent, have the professional capacity to administer the law and that they respect fundamental human rights in performing their functions; providing for appeals to civilian courts for serious cases tried by military courts, to ensure the military does not cover-up human rights violations by its members; and abolishing military jurisdiction over civilians
- Reduction of the army to a size that the country can afford and is commensurate with rational security and defense needs
- Establishing Parliamentary control over the declaration of war

7. *Opening Space for Political Participation and Good Governance*

The Rwanda National Congress advocates and supports a variety of measures to liberalize citizen's participation in politics, including the following:

- Review of laws that limit the freedom of political parties to register and to function freely and without fear of repression
- Fostering the development of a vibrant, independent, diverse, and responsible civil society, especially including independent human rights organizations and an independent media
- Establishing mechanisms to ensure free and fair elections, including an independent and inclusive national electoral commission, and to ensure the independent exercise of political party financing

8. *Adoption of Consociationalism as Rwanda's Form of Organization of Political Governance*

Rwanda has long been a deeply-divided society. The violence (and particularly the genocide) that the country experienced over the past 20 years has sharpened cleavages in Rwandan society. One of the major and most significant fault lines in Rwandan society is ethnicity and regionalism. Despite the government's assertion that the country has made or has achieved substantial progress towards reconciliation, Rwandan society today remains deeply divided along lines of ethnic and regional identity. There is a general consensus that the major factors that drive this conflict between the country's two major communities include contests over the question of political participation, access to political power and access to important resources. As a result, Rwanda must find peaceful mechanisms to manage conflict over these issues if it is to avoid cyclical war and bloodshed.

One method of organizing governance in deeply divided societies (characterized by identity-related cleavages, such as conflicts based on ethnicity, religion or linguistic differences) is to deal with these societal splits at the political level through consociational power-sharing. Consociationalism is a form of democracy which seeks to regulate the sharing of power in a state that comprises diverse societies (distinct ethnic, religious, political, national or linguistic groups) by extending and allocating collective rights to these groups. Consociational democracy is characterized by decision-making processes that take into account as broad a range of opinions as possible, as opposed to systems where vote-winning majorities can potentially ignore minority opinions.

Consociationalism stands in contrast to the concept of "majoritarian democracy."

Majoritarian systems call for the *integration* of minority groups and the distribution of individual rights only. However, the consociationalist approach consists of *accommodating* minorities and by granting them collective rights. Consociational democracy would help diverse Rwandan identities feel represented and safe while at

the same time building a national identity that transcends ethnicity, regionalism or other identity.

The RNC believes that the ultimate objective in Rwandan society should be to develop a single cohesive national identity based on common and equal citizenship for every citizen of the nation. The RNC recognizes – given the history of violence, repression, exclusion and marginalization that the different groups have been subject to at one time or another – it is not possible to eliminate citizens’ sense of identity and fear of victimization by “the other community” in the short run. It is necessary to provide adequate guarantees to the Tutsi community that democratically-elected governments in the future will not again succeed in organizing genocide against them.

The RNC further proposes that Rwanda must avoid conflict by adopting a consociational form of distribution of political power in all political, military and security institutions of the country. All communities must enjoy the opportunity to participate effectively in the management of the state and to protect their fundamental rights and interests.

As such, the Rwanda National Congress believes:

- All communities should have the opportunity to participate in the management of the state as Rwanda gradually develops a national identity that transcends ethnicity
- There must immediately begin an orientation towards building consensus rather than mutual exclusion
- Rwanda must embrace open, transparent and accountable government, civil society, and a thriving and entrepreneurial private sector
- The rule of law permeates all aspects of society
- Effective and efficient institutions must be created forthwith that respond to the needs and aspirations of all communities in an inclusive and democratic way

9. Economic Empowerment and Development

Post-genocide Rwanda has had notable achievements in economic reconstruction. Nevertheless, the country still faces significant economic challenges. Rwanda today is kept economically afloat by foreign aid. President Kagame takes pride and gives priority to investments in conspicuous projects, mostly in Kigali, while rural areas remain mired in poverty. Disparities between the rich and poor are growing. Rwanda’s economic life is dominated by the state and the ruling party. Private enterprises and entrepreneurship are stifled by unequal access to business opportunities, financing and credit.

Meanwhile, the phenomenal rise of the RPF as a business conglomerate over the last several years has been driven, in part, by illegal and/or criminal transfers of money and other assets (including privatized state-owned enterprises) from the government to

corporations owned by the RPF. The illegal transfers of government assets to the RPF has been facilitated, in part, by donor agencies that provided their development assistance through budget support, making it easier for the RPF to use government resources for its own business purposes. The system has also allowed President Kagame to use informal security networks to harass, silence or kill his opponents at home and abroad.

The Rwanda National Congress will support and promote economic policies based on equity and growth. The RNC will support economic policies that aim to promote economic growth, rather than simply redistribute scarce resources among a privileged few as is now the case. The RNC will promote and support policies and programs for:

- Redefining the role of government to create stable macro-economic conditions conducive to trade and investment
- Investing in rural agricultural transformation to provide jobs and income, especially to the millions of women and unemployed youth
- Investing in science, technology, entrepreneurship and innovation to meet many of the unmet and under-met social, economic and business needs
- Building the capacity of Rwanda's industries and businesses to add value and trade nationally, regionally and globally
- Consolidating and establishing platforms for collaborating, creating and sharing knowledge and skills in government, private sector, and the non-governmental sector
- Reducing the role of the RPF and other political parties in the economy, and ensuring fairness in access to business opportunities, financing and credit
- Promoting climate-smart, environmentally-friendly "green" actions to make Rwanda's path to social and economic development sustainable
- Mobilizing, developing and deploying Rwanda's managerial and leadership talent and other human resources within Rwanda and the Diaspora towards national, regional, African and global development

10. Truth-Telling, Justice and Memory

Rwanda has experienced violence involving horrendous human rights abuses, including genocide, since 1959 and particularly, during the early 1990s. In response to this violence, the post-genocide Government of Rwanda undertook what is arguably the most ambitious attempt in human history to bring perpetrators of atrocity to justice. The Government opted to pursue a maximal approach to accountability that aimed to identify and hold accountable each and every person who participated in mass atrocity. Rwanda has used the formal judicial system, Gacaca and international justice to deal with the genocide. These processes of transitional justice should not be an end in themselves.

The success of transitional justice processes, in Rwanda as elsewhere, can only be measured in terms of their lasting impact on the society in which they have been adopted; on whether they have contributed to consolidating the rule of law; and whether they build social cohesion and enhance prospects for long-term peace and development.

The RNC supports truth, justice and memory processes that reflect the experiences of all our people without discrimination. The RNS shares some of the concerns of many Rwandans about the processes of accountability that Rwanda has undertaken. The judicial processes that the government of Rwanda has implemented have had very many shortcomings. The attempt to investigate and prosecute each and every suspected case of genocide, in a situation where the justice system was too weak to cope with the work load, led to violations of the rights of persons accused of genocide and to the denial of fair trial rights.

Rwandan society has yet to openly address the issue of violence that victims in the Hutu community experienced during the conflicts of the 1990s. The trials that both Rwanda and the ICTR have undertaken have not been even-handed; they have dealt exclusively with the genocide and have not addressed the grievances of Hutu victims of human rights violations. Far from expressing remorse and seeking the forgiveness of the victims, most of the perpetrators of the genocide remain in denial. Instead of bringing healing and reconciliation, Gacaca has led to confrontation among victims of the genocide and the rest of their communities. By bringing victims and the rest of their communities into confrontation, Gacaca has served to enhance divisions, rather than unite communities. Victims of the genocide resent the way in which the RPF has exploited the genocide to serve its political interests and goals. The Hutu community largely perceives the transitional justice processes that Rwanda has undertaken as “victors’ justice.”

As a result of these and other shortcomings, the processes of justice that Rwanda has undertaken have failed to achieve some of their principal objectives: eradicating a culture of impunity for gross human rights abuses; enhancing respect for human rights; promoting the rule of law; facilitating reconciliation; enhancing social cohesion; preventing conflict; and ensuring sustainable peace. The hope that justice would promote reconciliation and bring closure and healing to the victims has not been realized. In fact, Rwandan society remains deeply divided along ethnic lines and, in many ways, is collectively traumatized.

The contributions of Rwanda’s transitional justice processes to national reconciliation have been constrained by a lack of even-handedness in the administration of justice for prior atrocities and the absence of progress in democratization. Impunity for gross human rights violations is still deeply entrenched. Rwanda’s transition to democracy and the rule of law has been unsuccessful. The major causes of Rwanda’s conflict (namely

lack of freedom, conflict over political representation and access to power and resources) remain unresolved. Prospects for violent conflict remain high.

The Rwanda National Congress supports accountability for all human rights violations, regardless of the identity of the victims or the identity of the perpetrators of the alleged crime. The RNC also recognizes that it is not possible to investigate and prosecute all crimes that take place in a situation of mass atrocity in which large numbers of ordinary people participate and comply with applicable human rights standards. The RNC seeks, without discrimination, to ensure truth, justice and memory for all victims of the human rights violations that have taken place since 1990.

To this end, the Rwanda National Congress supports:

- The creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to establish a historical record of the Rwanda conflict that reflects the experiences of all communities of our nation
- Criminal prosecutions of persons who bear the greatest responsibility for the most serious human rights violations that have been committed during Rwanda's conflict since the 1990s
- Restorative justice processes for the remainder of persons who took part in committing human rights abuses during this period
- Review of cases of persons who have been tried, convicted and punished by Gacaca or national courts, where there is evidence that the accused have been victims of gross miscarriages of justice
- The provision of reparations for all victims of serious human rights violations that have been committed during Rwanda's conflict since 1990s
- The establishment of museums and monuments, days of remembrance and other ways and means to collectively remember, celebrate and honor all victims of all human rights abuses that have taken place in Rwanda
- The development of positive expressions of gratitude to past leaders who contributed to the social, economic and political development of a progressive, modern, and democratic Rwanda.

The RNC recommends that the government that will prepare the country for transition to democracy should organize a national dialogue on the aforementioned proposals as a matter of urgency. The RNC also recognizes that the transformation of war-torn, deeply-divided societies with histories of gross human rights abuses, into democratic, peaceful and stable states is a process fraught with difficult challenges. Accountability for past atrocities is a critical component of strategies to facilitate such transformation.

However, justice, whatever its form, must ensure the rule of law and be the insurer of peace and stability. Reform of political governance systems is ultimately more essential to the process of building more cohesive, peaceful and stable societies in the aftermath of mass atrocity. Transitional justice processes are unlikely to achieve their intended

objectives if they are not part of a wider process that addresses the root causes of a country's conflict.

11. Repatriation and Re-integration of Refugees

The problem of refugees has long been and remains one of the most visible manifestations of poor governance and enduring social cleavages in Rwanda. The problem of refugees is also a major driver of conflict in Rwandan society. The failure of successive governments to organize the voluntary repatriation and peaceful re-integration of significant numbers of refugees has been one of the major causes of violent conflict in Rwanda. The 1990 – 1994 war was partly a result of the unwillingness of the post-colonial governments to address and resolve the problem of Tutsi refugees. In 1994, the fall of the government that carried out the genocide led to an unprecedented exodus of Hutu refugees.

The majority of these refugees have returned to Rwanda. However, a very substantial number of Rwandans who fled the country after 1994 (including most of the middle class that populated Rwanda's government, business and civil society institutions up to 1994) remain in exile. A substantial number of Rwandans of all identities have fled the country since the RPF assumed power in 1994. While there may be some refugees whose decision to remain in exile is motivated by a desire to evade justice for crimes they may have committed during the genocide, the majority of this group remain in exile on account of legitimate fears of persecution. The factors that account for the unwillingness of these refugees to return to Rwanda include concerns over the absence of democracy and the rule of law; concerns for personal security; fear of political persecution; social and political exclusion; marginalization; and lack of confidence in the country's judicial system. Citizens of all ethnicities and identities continue to flee the country on account of these pervasive factors.

The return and peaceful re-integration of refugees is essential for the creation of conditions for national reconciliation and harmonious co-existence among the country's communities. The RNC will promote and support policies to end the problem of Rwandan refugees. The RNC is of the view that conditions for the peaceful return and re-integration of all refugees in Rwandan society do not yet exist. The current Government of Rwanda has colluded with some governments and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to forcefully repatriate some Rwandan refugees against their will. The RNC opposes and will campaign to cease forced repatriation of Rwandan refugees while Rwanda remains a repressive and authoritarian nation.

All repatriations of Rwandan refugees should be voluntary. After the era of dictatorial government, the RNC will work to address the historical root causes of the problem of refugees in Rwandan society, including lack of security, policies of discrimination against certain sectors of Rwandan society, violent persecution of critics and opponents of the government and their families. The RNC also commits itself to ensure that the

issues that compel Rwandans to stay in exile shall be addressed by and that conditions necessary to give refugees confidence that they can voluntarily return in dignity and freedom shall be established. The RNC will support the successful economic, social and political re-integration of returning refugees.

12. Unity, Reconciliation and Collective Healing

Rwanda has a long history of violent upheaval and ethnic and region-based cleavages. These cleavages were radicalized by long periods of poor and ineffective governance that included identity-based discrimination. Cleavages between the country's two major communities reached their worst level as a result of the violence, including the genocide, which the nation experienced during the 1990s. Post-genocide Rwanda has undertaken various initiatives to promote reconciliation in the aftermath of violent conflict, including genocide.

While the current government of Rwanda claims credit for having reconciled Rwandan society, it remains deeply divided along lines of ethnic identity. Several factors have acted as a hindrance to the process of national reconciliation, including:

- Reluctance of the majority of Rwandans to admit to knowledge of the circumstances in which genocide was carried out in their respective communities
- Unwillingness of perpetrators to express remorse for their crimes
- Commission of human rights abuses against members of the Hutu community during and after the genocide (including atrocities human rights violations against refugees in the Congo)
- Arbitrary arrests and detentions, extending to many years in most cases, of tens of thousands of genocide suspects
- Failure or omission of the judicial processes that Rwanda has undertaken to address human rights violations against members of the Hutu community

Prospects for reconciliation have also been undermined by various policies and practices that discriminate against certain sections of the population (including the abolition of French as a national language) and the Rwandese Patriotic Front's maneuvers to monopolise political power through unfair, undemocratic and often criminal means.

In order to build unity and reconciliation, the RNC will seek to ensure that there is synergy between the strategies mentioned above, notably the establishment of a democratic government, the adoption of consociational democracy, the repatriation and re-integration of refugees and the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and other forms of accountability for past human rights abuses. To further promote national unity and reconciliation, the Rwandan National Congress will seek to

promote the healing of victims of the various human rights violations that have taken place, affected families and communities and the nation as a whole.

Our belief is that every individual, family and community in Rwanda has to some extent suffered trauma as the result of the violence that Rwandan society has experienced. Some Rwandans are victims, perpetrators or both. All Rwandans need healing for unity and reconciliation to become a reality.

The Rwanda National Congress will also support the following additional policies and programs to promote reconciliation and unity among Rwandans:

- Reform of public sector institutions, including security sector bodies, to ensure fair representation of all communities, especially in management or command levels
- The re-integration into the armed forced or civilian life of members of armed groups that have been waging war against the Rwandan state
- Restoring the French language as an additional national language
- Public debates and education programs on citizenship, diversity and co-existence, directed especially towards the youth
- Affirmative action in favour of marginalized groups, such as Batwa

13. A Progressive Foreign Policy Based on Common Values and Interests, Adherence to International Law, and Mutual Respect Between States

Rwanda has a deplorable record of relations with the international community, in general, and its neighboring states, in particular. The Rwandan state has fueled endless and deadly conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo and has engaged in premeditated schemes to destabilize other states in the region. President Kagame's arrogant and often predatory approach to relations with Rwanda's neighbours has undermined the efforts of the international community to bring peace and stability to the Great Lakes region.

Rwanda's policies towards its neighbours have also antagonized governments of the region and generated bitter hatred against people of Rwandese descent in some countries. Rwanda owes its disproportionate blame in the Great Lakes region to efforts on the part of the international community to contain Rwanda's aggressive posture and to dissuade Rwanda from continuing its role of a "spoiler," ever eager to undermine regional peace, especially in the DRC. Rwanda's relations with states farther afield lack a principled basis. Its relationship with the West, for example, has been built on the foundation of exploiting the West's guilt over its failures in relation to the 1994 genocide.

Rwanda's policies and actions undermine peace and security in the Great Lakes region, as various United Nations reports, including the recent report on mapping of human

rights violations in the Democratic Republic of Congo have demonstrated. Rwanda's utter disregard for international law and the sovereignty of other states, its direct aggression towards neighboring states, its sponsorship of proxy groups to wage war against legitimate governments, and President Kagame's gratuitous arrogance towards the leaders and peoples of nations in the Great Lakes region fuel instability, conflict and immense suffering in the region. Rwanda's policies towards neighboring states are also a very significant hindrance to regional economic cooperation, as well as Rwanda's own security and development needs. As a result of Rwanda's foreign policies, Rwanda is deeply isolated in the region and its relations with major development partners continue to deteriorate.

Rwanda's prospects for long-term stability, peace and economic prosperity require an urgent review of the foundations of its relations with the international community. Rwanda's security and development is best served by peace and stability and good relations with its neighbors. Rwanda's image as a predatory and aggressive rogue state is detrimental to the long-term interests of nations in the Great Lakes region.

The Rwanda National Congress will endeavor to promote reconciliation and harmonious relations with neighboring states – based on mutual respect and respect of the sovereignty of other states – and peace in the Great Lakes region. The RNC will seek to strengthen regional organizations in which Rwanda is a member and to enhance Rwanda's positive contributions to promoting regional peace and advancing economic and cultural cooperation between Rwanda and her neighbors. The RNC will support the establishment of relations with the wider international community based on shared values and interests, rather than exploitation of the guilt over the failures of other nations with regard to the 1994 genocide.

VIII. Conclusion

Rwanda has previously experienced positive developments in its many centuries of existence. That we – Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa alike – are all Rwandans is undeniable. We celebrate with pride what and who we are, our collective contribution to what has been positive in our society and our common heritage as Rwandans. Yet during the last 50 years, Rwandans have instigated and repeated tragedies of unimaginable proportions, including the crime of genocide. Rwandans have inflicted, and still inflict, immense destruction, death and suffering on their fellow Rwandans, often with the government and its institutions as the shameless and callous organizer and cheerleaders of barbarous acts.

Beneath the thousand hills of Rwanda and the jungles of neighboring countries are the vast seas of blood, tears, fear and shame that now characterize us as a people. The current government of Rwanda has failed to learn from the obvious lessons of these appalling experiences. It has failed to marshal the energies and vast potential of all

Rwandans – regardless of ethnic origin, religion, language, or other differences – to build a solid foundation for a shared secure, peaceful, prosperous, progressive and united Rwanda.

We must not remain the Rwanda that is perpetually quarrelsome, self-destructive, and incapable of embracing freedom and democracy as pillars of a peaceful and stable society. Rwandans must reject tyranny and repression because these breed disaffection, mistrust, and conflict. Rwandans must resist abuses of their fundamental human rights exacted by today's regime because such abuses are not only inhuman, but also because they embody the seeds of tomorrow's tragedies. The RPF under President Kagame has failed to create the circumstances necessary to give the people of Rwanda a break from the cycle of violence and hope for a secure future. Rwandans cannot endure any longer the current state of crisis, the fundamental source of which is the denial of the people's inherent right to freedom and security.

The failure of the current government to recognize and accept the legitimacy of the people's claim to freedom is not only a constraint to social and economic development; it is also a driver of violent conflict. Rwanda must undergo profound political change if it is to avoid violent conflict and immense human suffering in years to come. The Rwanda National Congress is committed to mobilizing the whole of Rwandan society to empower citizens to work together peacefully to replace the current repressive regime with a democratic, multi-ethnic nation.

The Rwanda National Congress reminds all present and future generations of Rwandans that Rwanda is much more important than, and must transcend, any single person, any single dictator, any single ethnic group, any single region, or any single organization or political party. Rwanda is an enduring and beautiful nation with a resilient people, each one of whom is endowed with inalienable rights as a human being and citizen of the nation. Rwanda is our only home, one in which we and posterity are entitled to live in peace and harmony. We can only survive and thrive as a nation if we work together to ensure prosperity, justice and peace for all its inhabitants.

The renewal of our nation will require a new approach to governance and the management of conflict. The new Rwanda that we seek to build must be grounded in freedom as its foundation. The strategies that we shall apply to resolve the crisis that Rwanda faces must be anchored in values, and must aim to address the root causes of conflict in our society and to restore dignity to all our people.

It is the mission and core goal of the Rwanda National Congress to mobilise all Rwandans to participate in building a future based on freedom, unity, peace, equality, democracy and prosperity for all.