

UN Department of Public Information
4 April 2008

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

Earlier this year I visited the Genocide Memorial in Kigali. The experience was as harrowing as my first visit to Rwanda two years earlier, and being there as Secretary-General of the United Nations carried even more profound meaning for me. It was impossible to pass through those halls and not be affected -- indeed, shaken to the core -- by what the Rwandan people endured.

On this fourteenth anniversary of the genocide, my thoughts again go to the victims -- more than 800,000 innocent people who lost their lives. May they rest in peace. My thoughts go to the survivors. May their courage and resilience serve as an inspiration to all of us.

The United Nations has a moral duty to act on the lessons of Rwanda. That is why this day is also a call to bolster efforts to prevent another genocide. It is a cause I am resolved to pursue, in my time as United Nations Secretary-General and in the years beyond. I have created the full-time position of Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide and appointed a Special Adviser with a focus on the **responsibility to protect** -- the obligation accepted by all States to act collectively, through the Security Council, when a population is threatened with genocide, ethnic cleansing or crimes against humanity. I will spare no effort in working with Member States to translate this principle from words to deeds.

I am equally determined to work for human rights everywhere -- to uphold them, protect them, defend them, ensure that they are a living reality. This year, to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations is pursuing a global awareness campaign to ensure that human rights are known, understood and enjoyed by everyone, everywhere. It is often those who most need their rights protected, who also need to be informed that the Declaration exists -- and that it exists for them.

In all these endeavours, each one of us has a role to play: Governments, the media, civil society and individuals. May the searing memory of the genocide in Rwanda always spur us on in our mission.

UN Secretary-General's Statement available at:
<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/sgsm11495.doc.htm>