

AFRICAN UNION
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**EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
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EX.CL/107 (V)

**REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON ON THE
COMMEMORATION OF THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF
THE RWANDA GENOCIDE - 7TH APRIL 2004**

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1. The Executive Council during its meeting in N'Djamena, Chad from 3 – 6 March 2003 adopted decision **EX.CL/Dec.16(II)**, which designated 7 April 2004, as the 10th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, and requested the AU Commission to commemorate it as a day of remembrance of the victims of the genocide in Rwanda, and as a reaffirmation of Africa's resolve to prevent and fight genocide on the continent;

2. It further called upon all Member States and Civil Society Organizations to publicize the anniversary and commemorate 7 April as a day of reflection on the tragedy of Rwanda and of commitment to the prevention of genocide in the Continent through appropriate activities;

3. It also recommended to the United Nations and the international community at large to take appropriate steps to commemorate 7 April 2004 as a day of reflection and recommitment against genocide in the world;

4. In implementing this decision, the Chairperson of the Commission ensured that the Commission was fully involved in the commemoration of the 10th anniversary of Rwanda Genocide by participating fully in the activities organized in:

- A. Kigali, Rwanda,**
- B. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and**
- C. London, Britain**
- D. Cape Town, South Africa**
- E. Washington DC, USA**

A. Commission's participation in Rwanda;

5. The Chairperson of the Commission joined other Heads of States and Government to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Rwanda Genocide in Rwanda by attending an International Conference on Genocide organized in Kigali from 04 April 2004 – 06 April 2004, and the State commemorative function that took place on 07 April 2004.

6. The theme for the conference was to '**Prevent and banish genocide forever, through universal active solidarity**' and it attracted speakers and participants from within and outside the continent. It focused on post conflict evolution of torn societies and reconstruction challenges as well as striving towards universal solidarity by holding an in-depth discussion on:

Preserving memory and fighting denial; Justice and rebuilding social cohesion; Living conditions of survivors/trauma; Prevention and intervention to stop genocide: political will, legal instruments, mechanisms, constraints, resources; and Rebuilding torn societies through universal solidarity: memory/creation of a common history, justice and assisting survivors.

7. The Rwanda State commemoration function focused on: burying rests of victims; commemorating and honoring the victims; the official opening of the Memorial; testimonies from survivors; 10 minutes of silence; a visit to one of the genocide scenes and an inaugural session of the memorial of the Belgian peacekeepers.

B. Commission's participation in Ethiopia:

8. At the AU Headquarters' in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the Commission was fully involved in organizing joint activities with the Government of Ethiopia and the Embassy of Rwanda in Ethiopia. The activities that started from 06 April to 08 April 2004 included the following:

9. The Chairperson of the Commission made a preface to the report and disseminated a summary and the recommendations of the IPEP Report in English and French to all PRC Members and to the public. This was posted on the AU website and also distributed to all Members of the PRC and other dignitaries that attended the commemoration at the AU headquarters'. The whole report is being republished in a user-friendly edition.

10. The AU Commission launched a competition for the design of the Genocide Memorial Museum (Alem Bekagn Memorial) that will be put up jointly with the Government of Ethiopia at the AU Commission in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Since it was not feasible to erect the memorial on 7th April, the intention to erect one was announced on that day by both H. E The President of Ethiopia and the Commissioner for Political Affairs.

11. The A.U Commission wrote to the UN Secretary General to request for a Special Session on the Rwanda Genocide during the UN Security Council meeting. It also wrote to all Member States requesting for One Minute (1 minute) of Silence at the GMT time equivalent to 13.00hrs Addis Ababa, time, and requested the African Commission on Human and People's Rights to take the lead in the country specific preparations for the commemoration of the Rwanda Genocide.

12. On the 6th April 2004, the Commission joined the Rwandan Community in Ethiopia, other invited guests and the public in a Candle Vigil walk organized by the Embassy of Rwanda and the Mayor of Addis Ababa, from Rwanda Embassy to Meskel Square where a film on “*A Hundred Days*” was shown and a message from the Mayor of Addis Ababa on Rwanda Genocide was given to the public.

13. On the 7th April 2004, at the African Union Commission, the flags at the African Union and in Ethiopia were hosted at half-mast, a military band was deployed in the AU Compound to play memorial music befitting the occasion, all Staff Congregate in front of building A and at exactly 01.00p.m, we observed a 10 minutes silent walk. This session was concluded with prayers by the different religious leaders.

14. The PRC held a special open session at the African Union Conference Hall where the AU Commission, the Rwandan Community in Ethiopia, Officials from the Government of Ethiopia, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, UN Agencies, Civil Society Organizations and Members of the Press were invited. The session was started with a film show on Rwanda Genocide, followed by a presentation by Mr. Adama Dieng, the Registrar of ICTR, on “***The failure of the International Community to Prevent and Punish Genocide***”. This was followed by a debate by the members of the PRC and the Adoption of the Draft Declaration. The session was concluded by messages from the Commissioner of Political Affairs of the African Union, the UN Under Secretary General of the ECA, H.E the Ambassador of Rwanda in Ethiopia, Keynote address by the President of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the President of National Assembly from Rwanda. The session ended with the distribution of t-shirts, caps, posters and other memorabilia, and a film show during the reception at the Congo Hall.

15. The Commission also participated in a public symposium organized by the Government of Ethiopia at the Sheraton in remembrance for the Rwanda Genocide, and Renewal of Common African Commitment to “Never Again” The Public Symposium consisted of short presentations on ***Genocide and Terror: Reflections on the Criminality of Mass Political Violence and The Role of Civil Society in Preventing Genocide***” The Deputy Chairperson of the AU Commission gave a Keynote presentation on “***The African Union and its Commitment to preventing Genocide.***”

16. On the 8th April 2004, the AU Commission participated in an Academic Lecture organized at the University of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. A panel discussion was organized, where the discussed evolved around **“Genocide and Terror: Reflections on the Criminality of Mass Political Violence.”**

C. Commissions Participation in the Rwanda Genocide Forum in London

17. The Deputy Chairperson of the Commission represented the Commission in a one-day forum held in London on 27/03/04 to examine questions of International response and responsibility emerging from the events of 1994 genocide in Rwanda. The forum dwelt on questions about international responsibility and generated ideas for future conflict prevention.

18. The Rwanda Forum was a high profiled, hard-hitting and analytical symposium, structured according to different themes, one of which was the vision for the future. The Deputy Chairperson made a presentation on **‘What Rwanda needs, to ensure a peaceful future and how Rwanda’s history can be used to positive effect in conflict prevention in Africa.’**

D. The Commission’s participation in Cape Town South Africa

19. On 19 April 2004, in Cape Town, South Africa, the Deputy Chairperson attended a conference organized by the *Institute for Justice and Reconciliation* reflecting on April 1994 and After (the dawn of the South Africa transformation and the start of the Rwanda Genocide). As a Keynote Speaker, the Deputy Chairperson gave a presentation on: ***The Rwanda Genocide: A National Tragedy, and An International Disgrace.***

E. The Commission’s participation in Washington DC, USA

20. On 05 May 2004, in Washington DC, USA, The Africa Program and the Conflict Prevention Project of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and the Committee on Conscience of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum invited Deputy Chairperson to present a

statement on " *the perspective of the Africa Union, with a focus on the capacity to intervene*"

Conclusion

21. The challenge in implementing this decision was in ensuring that the day was not commemorated as a one-time event, but in making sure that the commemoration makes an impact to the general public, Members of the Diplomatic Corps in Addis Ababa, the International Community, the United Nations and the Members States, and in reminding them of their role and responsibility in ensuring that 'Never Again' will genocide be allowed to take place in the world.

22. The Commission also hoped to have provided an opportunity for self-examination by all participants, in steps taken and structures developed to prevent any future genocide on the continent starting with the respect for life, dignity and human rights even at the very basic level of interpersonal relationship.

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