



**International Convention on
the Elimination of All Forms
of Racial Discrimination**

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Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

**Combined twenty-first to twenty-fourth periodic reports
submitted by Rwanda under article 9 of the Convention,
due in 2020***

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



Acronyms

CED	Convention on Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance
CERD	Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DDPA	Durban Declaration and Plan of Action
DGIE	Directorate General of Immigration and Emigration
FBOs	Faith-Based Organizations
GoR	Government of Rwanda
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
ILPD	The Institute of Legal Practice and Development
MAJ	<i>Maison d'Accès à la Justice</i>
MINALOC	Ministry of Local Government
MINEDUC	Ministry of Education
MINIJUST	Ministry of Justice
MoH	Ministry of Health
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
NST1	National Strategy for Transformation 2017–2024
RCS	Rwanda Correctional Service
REB	Rwanda Basic Education Board
RIB	Rwanda Investigation Bureau
TBRTF	Treaty Body Reporting Task Force
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees

I. Introduction

1. The Government of Rwanda (GoR) is pleased to present Rwanda's combined 21st, 22nd, 23rd and 24th reports (the report) under Article 9 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).
2. Rwanda's report covers the period from May 2016 to December 2023 and should be read in conjunction with Rwanda's Common Core Document of 2015.
3. Rwanda last appeared before the Committee in April 2016. The Committee considered Rwanda's combined 18th to 20th periodic reports at its 2428th and 2429th meetings (CERD/C/SR.2428 and 2429), held on 28th and 29th April 2016. At its 2441st meeting held on 10th May 2016, the Committee adopted the concluding observations based on Rwanda's report, which were subsequently transmitted to the Government of Rwanda (GoR). Thus, this report directly responds to the issues identified by the Committee and provides additional information on progress made towards implementing the provisions of the ICERD.
4. The GoR also refers the Committee to Rwanda's 2020 Universal Periodic Review report, which contains information relevant to Rwanda's implementation of the ICERD.

II. Preparation and structure of the report

5. The report was prepared by the cross-institutional national Treaty Body Reporting Task Force (TBRTF) under the coordination of the Ministry of Justice (MINIJUST). The TBRTF is composed of representatives from relevant government and public institutions as well as other stakeholders.
6. During the preparation of the report, meetings and other interactions of the Task Force were attended by representatives from the MINIJUST, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MINAFFET), the Ministry in Charge of Emergency Management (MINEMA), the Ministry of Public Service and Labour (MIFOTRA), the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF), the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the Ministry of Health (MoH), the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC), the Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC), the Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement (MINUBUMWE), the Judiciary, the Gender Monitoring Office (GMO), the Institute of Legal Practice and Development (ILPD), the Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB), the Rwanda Law Reform Commission (RLRC), the National Electoral Commission (NEC), the Rwanda Correctional Service (RCS), the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR), the Rwanda National Police (RNP), Directorate General of Immigration and Emigration (DGIE), Rwanda Governance Board (RGB), Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities (RALGA), the National Public Prosecution Authority (NPPA), and the National Consultative Forum of Political Organisations (NFPO).
7. Other government stakeholders also played an active role in the report drafting process. The institutions involved include the Rwanda Bar Association (RBA), Coalition *Umwana ku Isonga* (CUI), *Collectif des Ligues et Associations de Défense des Droits de l'Homme* (CLADHO), the Great Lakes Initiative for Human Rights and Development (GLIHD), the *Communauté des Potiers du Rwanda* (COPORWA), Legal Aid Forum (LAF), the Health Development Initiative (HDI), the *Association Rwandaise des Journalistes* (ARJ), HAGURUKA, the National Union of Disability Organisations in Rwanda (NUDOR), Never Again Rwanda (NAR), Rwanda Media Commission (RMC), and the Center for Rule of Law Rwanda (CERULAR).
8. As a result, the report preparation followed a participatory approach through wide stakeholder consultations.
9. The report has three main parts, namely (I) introduction, (II) preparation and structure of the report, and (III) concerns and recommendations. Part three responds to the concluding observations and recommendations received by the GoR in May 2016 and other new developments registered during the period under consideration for the implementation of the provisions of the Convention. This is done by following the order of articles as they appear in the Covenant.

III. Concerns and recommendations

Article 1

Definition of racial discrimination

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 7 of the concluding observations CERD/C/RWA/CO/18-20

10. The Government of Rwanda (GoR) is committed to fight discrimination in all its forms. In fact, given the Rwanda's history of decades of discrimination that culminated into the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, Rwanda has compelling reasons to commit strongly to the fight against racial discrimination. This commitment not only honors the memory of past atrocities but also lays the foundation for a peaceful and prosperous future.

11. The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda prohibits discrimination. In Article 16, the Constitution stipulates that "all Rwandans are born and remain equal in rights and freedoms. Any form of or propaganda for discrimination, including on the basis of ethnicity, family or descent, clan, skin colour, sex, region, social status, religion or belief, opinion, wealth, cultural differences, language, economic status, physical or mental disability or any other form of discrimination are prohibited and punishable by law."

12. The criteria and grounds set out in the definition of racial discrimination have been incorporated into the Constitution, particularly paragraph (g) of the preamble, Article 10 (b), and Article 16 relating to protection from discrimination. Moreover, as the Constitution was not intended to exhaust all the grounds for discrimination, it left a room where other possible grounds could be catered for, and therefore, it included "any other form of discrimination" among the grounds.

13. In addition to the above, Rwanda has relevant laws implementing the above Constitutional provisions and Article 1 of the Convention. The Law No. 47/2001 of 18/12/2001 on prevention, suppression, and punishment of the crime of discrimination and sectarianism (Discrimination and Sectarianism Law); and Law No. 68/2018 of 30/08/2018 determining offences and penalties in general as amended to date (2018 Law on Offences and Penalties) in Articles 1 and 163 of the just mentioned laws respectively, define discrimination to include criteria and grounds provided for by the Convention. More importantly, both laws refer to international conventions to which Rwanda is a party.

14. On one hand, Article 1 of the discrimination and sectarianism law defines discrimination as any speech, writing, or actions based on ethnicity, region or country of origin, the colour of the skin, physical features, sex, language, religion or ideas aimed at depriving a person or group of persons of their rights as provided by Rwandan law and by International Conventions to which Rwanda is a party.

15. On the other hand, article 163 of the law on offences and penalties criminalises and punishes discrimination in case of commission of the following acts:

- 1° act which inconveniences a person or a group of people or causes division among persons or a group of people on the basis of race, ethnicity, origin, clan, family connection, colour of skin, sex, region, nationality, religion, political ideology, economic classes, culture, language, social status, physical or mental disability or physical appearance;
- 2° acts aimed at denying a person or a group of people their rights granted under the Rwandan law or international conventions ratified by Rwanda, on the basis of race, ethnicity, origin, clan, family connection, colour of skin, sex, region, nationality, religion, political ideology, economic classes, culture, language, social status, physical or mental disability or physical appearance; and
- 3° act instigating a person to deny another person or a group of people their rights granted under the Rwandan law or international conventions ratified by Rwanda, on the basis of race, ethnicity, origin, clan, family connection, colour of skin, sex, region, nationality, religion, political ideology, economic classes, culture, language, social status, physical or mental disability or physical appearance.

16. Lastly, Rwanda is a monist State, and as such, any ratified treaty becomes part and parcel of national law in accordance with the Constitution.¹

Article 2

Measures for combating and eliminating racial discrimination

Discrimination on the basis of nationality

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 9 of the concluding observations

CERD/C/RWA/CO/18-20

17. The census conducted in 2022 and published in February 2023 used the numbers for the total population: females, males, youth, elderly, Rwandans, and foreigners. As such, the concern raised about dual nationality included in the previous census has been remedied in the latest census. The GoR ensures that nationality cannot constitute a basis for discrimination.

Provision of data

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 11 of the concluding observations

CERD/C/RWA/CO/18-20

18. The GoR takes note of the persistent concern of the Committee in relation to its position on the issue of ethnicity in general and “Batwa” in particular. In this regard, the GoR wishes to reiterate its already stated position as was clearly explained in the Rwandan Common Core document (refer to paragraph 5) and Rwanda’s previous report (refer to paragraph 34 of eighteenth to twentieth periodic reports).

19. The deliberate choice by the GoR to consolidate national unity by adopting a policy according to which there is only one united Rwandan community composed of all Rwandans (Banyarwanda), instead of divisions based on ethnicity, is in line with the Convention and the state general recommendation No 8 (1990) above.

20. Due to Rwanda’s history, particularly with regard to the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, the GoR is of the position that there is a strong justification, in line with the proposal set forth by the Committee in General Recommendation No 8 (1990), as to why it does not identify members of a particular ethnic group.

21. Based on the above, the GoR wishes to report to the Committee that it does not consider carrying out discriminatory specific socio-economic studies or data collection in Rwanda.

22. Notwithstanding the above, Rwanda has been implementing specific programmes and interventions targeting the most vulnerable groups in the society with the aim of improving their socio-economic status. Information on the impact of these programmes is provided in the subsequent specific sections of the report.

23. Support to vulnerable groups is one of the GoR’s key priorities. This is evident in several national policies and programmes, such as the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1) which was adopted in 2017 and is being implemented until June 2024. The NST1 has a specific pillar on Social Transformation, which aims at providing support to vulnerable groups in Rwanda.

24. The pillar on social transformation sets key strategic interventions designed to support vulnerable groups and to eradicate extreme poverty. The strategic interventions include scaling up the minimum package for graduation; improving the management of the One Cow per Poor Family (Girinka) Programme and other social programs run at the village level and supporting poor households to acquire small livestock; and enhancing targeting based on the nationwide roll-out of the household profiling as well as strengthen partnerships and coordination between government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), and the private sector in implementing poverty eradication programmes.

¹ The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda, article 169 read together with article 95.

25. Concerning the data on non-citizens living in Rwanda, the 5th Rwanda Population and Housing Census published showed that Rwanda hosts 117,375 resident foreigners. Among them, 59,916 are male, while 57,459 are female.²

Article 3

Condemnation, prohibition and eradication of racial segregation, apartheid and practices of this nature

26. Rwanda does not condone or practice racial segregation, apartheid and other practices of similar nature. Rwanda does not have and has never had any races among its native citizens. The concept of race as it is defined cannot apply in the Rwandan context.

27. However, Rwanda suffered more than three decades of discrimination based on ethnicity, which culminated in the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. Due to this bitter history, the Country resolved to reshape its future by adopting legal framework condemning, prohibiting, eradicating and punishing discrimination in all its forms. The legal and policy framework came to reinforce the resolve by Rwandans to consolidate national unity instead of entertaining divisions based on ethnicity.

28. Regarding the legal framework for prevention, suppression, and punishment of discrimination, the GoR refers the Committee to paragraphs 10–16 of the report.

Article 4

Condemnation and criminalisation of all propaganda based on ideas or theories of racial discrimination

Compatibility of criminal legislation with article 4 of the Convention

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 13 of the concluding observations CERD/C/RWA/CO/18-20

29. In 2018, the GoR adopted the 2018 law on offences and penalties. The law repealed Organic Law No. 01/2012/OL of 02/05/2012 instituting the penal code (2012 penal code). The latter criminalized and punished the crimes of discrimination and sectarianism in Article 136 without defining the acts themselves.

30. Unlike the 2012 penal code, the 2018 law on offences and penalties determines acts constituting discrimination and prescribes penalties in Article 163. The content of this article is in consonance with and gives full effect to Article 4 of the Convention.

31. It is worth reiterating that Article 163 stated above implements the constitutional provisions relating to discrimination, particularly Article 16 on protection from discrimination.

Article 5

Guarantee to everyone the right to equality before the law in the enjoyment of their rights

Situation of the Batwa

Follow-up information relating to paragraphs 15 (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f) and (g) of the concluding observations CERD/C/RWA/CO/18-20

32. The right to equality before the law is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda in Article 15. This provision stipulates that “all human beings are equal before the law. They enjoy equal protection of the law.” The Constitution in Article 51, sets out the duty to the State to act within the limits of its means to undertake special actions aiming at the welfare of the needy, the elderly and other vulnerable groups. Further, in accordance with Article 48 of the Constitution, while the State has the duty to put in place development

² NISR, fifth Rwanda Population and Housing Census, December 2023.

strategies for its citizens, the latter have the duty to participate in the development of the country through their dedication to work, safeguarding peace, democracy, equality and social justice as well as to participate in the defence of their country.

33. The Rwandan community, including members of the vulnerable groups, actively participates in the planning process, accountability mechanisms, and community assemblies that build social cohesion, such as community engagement and sensitization on human rights through government institutions and stakeholders; civic education through *Itorero*; the National *Umushyikirano* Council, which is held annually; the citizens' assembly (*Inteko z'abatwariye*) held weekly; and the community work (*Umuganda*) held monthly.

34. The GoR set up poverty reduction programmes to support poor and vulnerable groups, households, and individuals. The programmes include the Vision Umurenge programme 2020, which since December 2020 has been revised and became Vision 2050 (VUP), the Girinka programme, Community-Based Health Insurance (CBHI), shelter construction and rehabilitation, and school feeding.

35. The Constitution, in Article 20, provides for the right to education for every Rwandan. It also provides that primary education is compulsory and free in public schools. Additionally, the GoR's Education Sector Policy prevents disparity in education, be it by sex, region, social group, or other reason. The policy provides strategies to address disparities in education, including closely monitoring girls' and other vulnerable groups performance and achievement at all levels and giving special attention to female and other vulnerable groups' participation in education. The Ministry of Education adopted a Special Needs and Inclusive Education policy, and in its strategic plan 2018/19-2023/24, historically marginalized groups have been highlighted.

36. As a result of the implementation of the above-mentioned programmes, a number of achievements have been registered during the period under consideration. For instance, 155,994 new decent and productive jobs have been created, representing 75.9% of the target of 1,500,000 jobs between 2017 and 2024. This benefited Rwandans of different categories, including the most vulnerable. During the same period, more than 480,000 families received a cow through the Girinka Programme. This represents 99% of the target, which was 486,230 families. This is a significant increase compared with 2017, when 297,230 families were reached through the same scheme.³

37. Further, during the same period, more than 200,000 households with pregnant women or children below two years of age received direct support in cash. At least 42,000 tons of food supplements were provided to more than 100,000 children and more than 40,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women every year. The school feeding programme has reached all pupils and students in primary, secondary, and TVET schools. Regarding adequate housing, 87 model villages have been constructed across the country. 14,547 families were provided with adequate housing by 2014, up from 3,048 families in 2017.⁴

38. The National Employment Policy (2017–2024) in its strategies suggests measures for integrating youth and women particularly through the development of formal vocational training or on the job training adapted to the needs of the labour market. This is for all youth and women without any discrimination.

39. Furthermore, the law no 66/2018 of 30/082018 regulating labour in Rwanda in its article 9 provides for protection against discrimination at workplace. The relevant provision states that an employer must give employees equal opportunities at the workplace. That any kind of discrimination in labour relations is strictly prohibited. In this regard, an employer is prohibited from discriminating employees on basis of ethnic origin, family or ancestry, clan, skin colour or race, sex, region, economic categories, religion or faith, opinion, fortune, cultural difference, language, physical or mental disability or any other form of discrimination. It goes further to obligate every employer to pay employees equal salary for work of equal value without discrimination of any kind.

³ Data from NSTI implementation status.

⁴ Data from NSTI implementation status.

40. The Presidential Order No. 128/01 of 03/12/2020 relating to recruitment of public servants and inductions provides equal opportunity without discrimination using e-recruitment portal where all applicants are equally treated.

Participation by the Batwa in political and public affairs
Follow-up information relating to paragraph 17 of the concluding observations
CERD/C/RWA/CO/18-20

41. Regarding this particular recommendation, it is worth noting that the Constitution in Article 10 provides for six (6) fundamental principles that Rwanda commits itself to upholding. Among the six principles, paragraph 2 of the relevant article covers the eradication of discrimination and divisionism based on ethnicity, region, or any other ground, as well as the promotion of national unity, while paragraph 5 deals with building a state committed to promoting social welfare and establishing appropriate mechanisms for equal opportunity in social justice.

42. Article 27 of the Constitution explicitly recognizes the right to participate in government and public services. The article stipulates that all Rwandans have the right to participate in the government of the country, either directly or through their freely chosen representatives, in accordance with the law. It goes further to provide that all Rwandans have the right to equal access to the public service in accordance with their competence and abilities. In practice, public office is occupied through election, appointment, nomination, and recruitment in accordance with the law. Further, the Constitution provides for eight Senators who are appointed by the President of the Republic, and while doing so, the President of the Republic gives particular consideration to the principles of national unity, the representation of historically marginalised groups, and any other national interests.⁵

43. The government ensures that every Rwandan has an equal opportunity to participate in political and public affairs. Ethnicity is never regarded as a ground and should not qualify anyone for a political or public role or office.

Land issues
Follow-up information relating to paragraph 19 of the concluding observations
CERD/C/RWA/CO/18-20

44. Rwanda has put in place a national social protection strategy (2019–2024) and programmes for poor and potentially vulnerable households.

45. Social protection in Rwanda is defined as a set of public and private initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks, and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalized, with the overall objective of reducing social and economic vulnerability.

46. The mission of the social protection sector is to ensure that all poor and vulnerable men, women, and children are guaranteed a minimum standard of living and access to core public services; those who can work are provided with opportunities for graduating from poverty, and that increasing numbers of people are able to access risk sharing mechanisms that protect them from crises and shocks.

47. The GoR supports programs related to: one cow per poor family in order to reduce poverty and provide food security; and the construction of a cowshed and kitchen garden for people shifted from high-risk zones to decent houses. The poor households in general received land with more than 0.7 hectares and fertilizer subsidies and seeds.

48. For the settlement sites constructed, the rightful owners are entitled to land titles after 5 years of occupation. The Integrated Development Program (IDP) Model Projects have been established in all provinces and Kigali City in order to transform the socio-economic life of the population in rural areas. During the period under consideration, 86 IDP model villages have been constructed, accommodating 14,547 families.⁶

⁵ The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda, Article 80 (b).

⁶ NST1 implementation status.

49. In Rwanda, land is allocated and acquired through sale, donation, inheritance, succession, exchange, land sharing, or legal grant by competent authorities, the execution of an enforcement order, and other means of allocation and acquisition of land determined in accordance with relevant laws.⁷

Situation of refugees and asylum seekers

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 21 of the concluding observations

CERD/C/RWA/CO/18-20

50. Relocation of refugees to a third country is among the durable solutions for refugees. Resettlement depends on the willingness of the resettlement country to accept a refugee for legal stay in its territory in accordance with its laws and regulations. UNHCR supports the resettlement of individuals who are determined to be refugees under UNHCR's mandate, for whom resettlement is the most appropriate durable solution, and who fall under UNHCR's Resettlement Submission Categories namely legal and/or physical protection needs; survivors of torture and/or violence; medical needs; women and girls at risk; family reunification; children and adolescents at risk; and lack of foreseeable alternative durable solutions. Burundian refugees are also included in the resettlement programme on an individual case basis. During the period under consideration, 130 Burundian refugees have been resettled to third countries, while many others were repatriated to their own country upon their consent.

51. The GoR enacted Law No. 13 ter/2014 of 21/05/2014 relating to refugees, which explicitly provided for the principle of non-refoulement. The principle applies to all refugees and asylum seekers, including those from Burundi. This has recently been repealed by Law No. 042/2024 of 19/04/2024 governing refugees and applicants for refugee status in Rwanda, which maintained the principle of non-refoulement. Article 27 of this law stipulates that a refugee or an applicant for refugee status cannot be expelled from Rwanda or deported to a country where his or her life or liberty could be threatened. However, the Organ may expel from the Rwandan territory a person whose refugee status is revoked in the interest of national security and public order.

52. As explained in the preceding paragraph, the 2014 law relating to refugees has been repealed by the law No. 042/2024 of 19/04/2024 governing refugees and applicants for refugee status in Rwanda. The latter establishes in Article 15 an Appeal Tribunal that has legal personality, independence, and enjoys administrative and financial autonomy.

53. Following the adoption of Law No. 042/2024 of 19/04/2024 governing refugees and applicants for refugee status in Rwanda, other key legislation has been revised or adopted. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the adoption of Law No. 041/2024 of 19/04/2024 amending Law n° 30/2018 of 02/06/2018 determining the jurisdiction of courts. Specifically, article one of this amended law expanded the jurisdiction of the High Court to try at the first instance a claim of an applicant for refugee status and that of a refugee decided by the Appeal Tribunal. Furthermore, the GoR adopted Presidential Order No. 051/01 of 19/04/2024 governing the Appeal Tribunal for refugees and applicants for refugee status. This order gives details on the asylum application process, particularly in Articles 12–18.

54. To prevent sexual violence and child abuse, the campaigns against sexual violence and child abuse are conducted on a regular basis in all camps and where cases are identified laws are enforced, perpetrators are punished and victims are assisted.

55. To prevent promiscuity, shelters in camps are rehabilitated and extended where possible to accommodate all family members; houses that were occupied by households relocated to third countries or voluntarily repatriated are redistributed to other families. Regarding the extension of camp areas, it is not easy due to land scarcity. However, the GoR will continue to consider the possibilities based on the need.

56. The GoR promotes refugee inclusion in the government system through the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and the Global Refugee Compact.

⁷ Prime Minister's Order N° 008/03 of 03/07/2022 determining modalities for land allocation and acquisition, emphyteutic lease, and State land concession and lease, Article 3.

Refugees' children have been integrated into the national education system; they study in the same schools as nationals and follow the same curriculum. As of April 2024, 8,247 refugee children are enrolled in the Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme and 23,507 in primary school, 12,052 refugees are enrolled in secondary school, and 149 in university.⁸

57. Camp-based refugees receive health services from health facilities established within refugee camps, and for complicated cases that need secondary and tertiary healthcare, they are referred to district hospitals, provincial hospitals, and reference hospitals following the national health referral system.

58. Urban refugees and refugee students in boarding schools were enrolled in the national health insurance scheme. So far, 123,664 camp-based refugees and 10,369 urban refugees have received healthcare services.⁹

59. All refugee students in primary and secondary school benefit from the school feeding programme and are provided with school materials. The GoR introduced the strategic plan for refugee inclusion and the socio-economic inclusion of refugees and host communities (*Jya Mbere* Project),¹⁰ which supports education infrastructure construction to improve the quality of education.

60. Awareness campaigns on national laws, refugee law, regulations in the camp, and rights are regularly conducted in refugee camps.

61. Besides the asylum seekers and refugees from Burundi, it is worth noting that Rwanda hosts asylum seekers and refugees from other countries within and outside the African continent, and efforts are being made to improve their basic human rights and living conditions. Since 2016, Rwanda has hosted at least 134,593 refugees and asylum seekers. In addition, Rwanda received 2,059 asylum seekers who were evacuated from Libya under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the GoR, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and the African Union (AU). Most of them have gone to resettlement, and until December 31, 2023, the Transit Centre remained with 669.¹¹

Article 6

Effective protection and remedies against any acts of racial discrimination

Access to effective remedies and provision of data relating to the application of article 6

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 23 of the concluding observations CERD/C/RWA/CO/18-20

62. With a view to disseminating the content of the human rights conventions, including the ICERD, to which Rwanda is a state party, the GoR took the initiative to translate in Kinyarwanda (the national language) all core human rights instruments. This was done in 2011, and copies were disseminated to government institutions.

63. In addition to the above, awareness campaigns on the elimination of all forms of discrimination are conducted across the country regularly. The campaigns are centred on the ICERD.

64. In September and December 2018, 60 government officials were trained on core international human rights instruments to which Rwanda is state party, including the ICERD, and the human rights obligations stemming from membership. Participants to the trainings

⁸ Source, the Ministry in charge of Emergency Management (MINEMA).

⁹ Source, the Ministry in charge of Emergency Management (MINEMA).

¹⁰ Jya Mbere (Social Economic Inclusion of Refugees and Host Communities-SEIRHC) Project aims at improving access to basic services and economic opportunities for refugees and host communities and support environmental management in target areas in Rwanda; Gatsibo, Gicumbi, Gisagara, Karongi, Nyamagabe and Kirehe Districts hosting respectively refugee camps of Nyabiheke, Gihembe, Mugombwa, Kiziba, Kigeme and Mahama.

¹¹ Source, the Ministry in charge of Emergency Management (MINEMA).

included officials from MINIJUST at the District level (MAJ) who assist citizens to access justice, RIB, RCS, and media professionals.

65. Concerning legal assistance, it is important to mention that the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda recognizes everyone's right to due process of law and equality before the law. Rwanda has been implementing its legal aid policy since 2014, which clearly sets out eligibility criteria for legal aid. However, being a member of a historically marginalized group is not a criterion for benefiting from legal assistance. In addition, Article 59 of Law No. 83/2013 of 11/09/2013 establishing the Bar Association in Rwanda and determining its organization, provides for the mandatory provision of legal aid to the poor by members of the Bar Association. The Ministry of Justice signed an agreement with the Rwanda Bar Association and provides funds per year to the Bar to represent minors and indigents who are in conflict with the law.

66. The provision of legal aid services through the Maison d'Accès à la Justice (MAJ) services and *Abunzi* (Conciliators) committees at the local level continues to improve access to universal, quality, and affordable justice. MAJ staff based at district level (three staff at each district) facilitate access to legal aid activity at district level and the decentralized outreach activities at the administrative sector level to facilitate the population, including vulnerable groups, to have access to quality and affordable justice. At the community level, there are *Abunzi* committees that facilitate Alternative Disputes Resolution (ADR) mechanisms, and they provide free service to the beneficiaries.

67. Rwandans continue to show a high level of satisfaction with how justice is accessed. The most recent Rwanda Governance Scorecard (RGS) shows that the level of satisfaction with access to justice is generally at 85.81%. The level of citizen satisfaction with access to legal aid is at 81.40%, the level of citizen satisfaction with MAJ effectiveness is at 72.70%, and the level of citizen satisfaction with *Abunzi* performance is at 86.90%.¹²

Article 7

Measures in the fields of teaching, education, culture and information to combat racial discrimination

68. Referring to the Committee's guidelines for the ICERD-specific document to be submitted by state parties under Article 9, Paragraph 1 of the Convention, the GoR provides information on this specific provision as follows:

Education and teaching

69. The GoR has taken legislative and administrative measures necessary to combat discrimination in field of education and teaching.

70. The Constitution guarantees the right to education in Article 20 in the following terms: "Every Rwandan has the right to education. Freedom of learning and teaching is guaranteed in accordance with conditions determined by law. Primary education is compulsory and free in public schools." The Constitution, in the subsequent paragraph of the same provision, delegated the power to a law to determine the organization of education. This constitutional provision, especially the first paragraph, shows that the right to education is guaranteed to every Rwandan without any discrimination.

71. At the Policy level, Rwanda has also adopted a number of policies, strategies and guidelines in the education sector. These include:

- Education Sector Policy (2003);
- Risk Management Policy and Procedure (2021);

¹² Rwanda Governance Scorecard, 10th Edition. RGS is a home-grown quantifiable index that consistently gauges the state of governance in Rwanda. It places global governance standards and home-grown indicators at the centre of its method which makes it uniquely relevant to both the international and national contexts.

- National Comprehensive School Feeding Policy (2019);
- Rwanda School Feeding Operational Guidelines (2021);
- Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (2020);
- School Sports Policy (2020);
- Teacher Development and Management Policy in Rwanda (2007);
- TVET Policy (2015);
- Girl's Education Policy (2008);
- ICT in Education Policy (2016);
- Higher Education Policy (2008);
- Special Needs and Inclusive Education Policy and its Strategic Plan (2018);
- Adult Education Policy (2014);
- Nine Years' Education Policy (2008).

72. The GoR has adopted a number of education sector strategic plans since 2004. The most recent sector strategic plan covers the period between 2018 and 2024.

73. Besides the policies, the GoR adopted new laws and sector strategic plans in the areas of education and teaching, including Law No. 010/2021 of 16/02/2021 determining the organization of education. The law makes it clear that the mission of education in Rwanda is to provide all, in an inclusive manner, with quality education to solve problems in order to achieve sustainable development.¹³

74. All laws, policies, and other strategic documents in the education sector mentioned above have been adopted to serve the common needs of all Rwandans and do not contain any provisions that condone discrimination of any nature, including racial discrimination.

75. The Committee is also interested in information regarding steps taken to include, in school curricula and in the training curricula of teachers and other professionals, programmes and subjects to help promote human rights issues that would lead to better understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all groups. In this regard, it is worth noting that the Education Sector Policy (2003) provided strategic guidance on the philosophical basis of the role of education in Rwanda.

76. The policy makes it clear among the objectives to contribute to the promotion of a culture of peace and to emphasise Rwandan values, particularly *agaciro* (self-dignity), *kwigira* (self-reliance), and *ubumwe* (unity), and the universal values of justice, peace, tolerance, respect for human rights, gender equality, solidarity, and democracy. In more concrete terms, the education policy objectives include promoting an integral, comprehensive education oriented towards respect for human rights and adapted to the present situation of the country.

77. School curricula have also been revised to ensure that human rights values are reflected and this went hand in hand with the revision of textbooks with a view to removing all language that conveys stereotypes and discrimination.

Culture

78. In the preamble of the Constitution, the people of Rwanda consider that they enjoy the privilege of having one country, a common language, a common culture, and a long-shared history, which must enable them to have a common vision of their destiny. Article 11 of the Constitution sets out the Rwandan culture as a source of home-grown solutions. Article 36 recognizes to every Rwandan the right to activities that promote national culture and the duty to promote it. Further, according to Article 47, the duty to safeguard and

¹³ Article 3 of the Law N° 010/2021 of 16/02/2021 determining the organisation of education.

promote the national culture lies with the state. The state also has the duty to preserve the national cultural heritage.

79. Besides the Constitution, Rwanda adopted the Law No. 28/2016 of 22/7/2016 on the preservation of cultural heritage and traditional knowledge.

80. In addition to the above legal framework, Rwanda has adopted, since 2015, the National Culture Heritage Policy. The policy provides broad pillars and guiding elements to renew Rwanda's commitment to preserving the core values of her culture and defines strategies to ensure that culture plays its historical role in informing the socio-economic transformation of Rwanda.

81. At the institutional level, a number of institutions have been established and operationalized:

- MINUBUMWE is entrusted with preserving historical memory, reinforcing national unity, and promoting citizenship, education, and culture.
- Rwanda Cultural Heritage Academy (RCHA) is a public institution established in 2020. It was established by Presidential Order No. 082/01 of 28/08/2020 as the result of the merger of three (3) institutions and thus combines their responsibilities. The mission of RCHA is to preserve national heritage and safeguard the *Ikinyarwanda* language, culture, and values as a foundation of national unity and dignity (Article 6 of the above-mentioned Presidential Order). The detailed responsibilities of RCHA are listed in Article 7 of the same Presidential Order.
- Rwanda has also established the Rwandan Elders Advisory Forum (REAF) by Law No. 39/2013 of 16/06/2013 establishing the Rwandan Elders Advisory Forum and determining its mission, organisation and functioning. The mission of REAF is to advise the government on national topical issues, national political orientation, and challenges pertaining to good governance, justice, the economy, and social welfare.

82. Furthermore, Rwanda continues to celebrate – each year – national days with significant cultural importance. In this regard, for example, Rwanda celebrates *Umuganura* Day every first Friday of August each year. Also known as National Harvest Day or Thanksgiving Day, it marks the beginning of the annual harvest. The day is a celebration of Rwandan culture and heritage, with traditional dances, music, and food on display. Families and communities come together to give thanks for the harvest and to pray for a bountiful year ahead. The day is also an opportunity to promote Rwandan culture and raise awareness of the importance of agriculture to the country's economy.

Information

83. The Constitution recognizes and guarantees freedom of the press, of expression, and of access to information. However, the Constitution makes it clear that freedom of expression and freedom of access to information shall not prejudice public order, good morals, the protection of the youth and children, the right of every citizen to honour and dignity, or the protection of personal and family privacy.¹⁴

84. Besides the Constitution, Rwanda adopted Law No. 02/2013 of 08/02/2013 regulating media. Article 22 of the law provides that relevant registered bodies and organisations may, at their own initiative or upon request, exercise the right of reply, correction, or rectification when a person or a group of persons is subject to accusations in a media organ likely to harm their reputation or confidence on the basis of any form of discrimination or any other ground based on their responsibility.

85. Institutions have been put in place to ensure that any published information does not prejudice, in any way, members of the groups protected by the Convention or the group as a whole. Particularly, the Rwanda Media Commission (RMC) has the mandate to ensure professionalism among media practitioners and the quality of their services.

¹⁴ The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda, Article 38.

86. Further, media professionals are considered the government's key stakeholders in human rights work in general and human rights awareness in particular. The GoR conducts regular training of members of the media on human rights. Such trainings have been organized on core UN human rights instruments, including the ICERD. Trainings have also been conducted on human rights mechanisms such as the UN Treaty Body, the Universal Periodic Review, and African human rights mechanisms, including the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Other recommendations

Ratification of other instruments

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 24 of the concluding observations

CERD/C/RWA/CO/18-20

87. Rwanda has ratified eight of the nine core human rights conventions, including the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Rwanda acceded to the convention on December 15, 2008, and submitted its initial and second reports in 2011 and 2018, respectively.

88. Rwanda has not yet ratified the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED). Rwanda is still considering the possibility of ratifying the CED.

89. However, the GoR will continue to increase the capacity of its law enforcement agents to investigate reported cases of missing persons and hold to account any person who might be found involved in acts amounting to enforced disappearance. For the period under consideration, 2,010 persons were reported missing. 1,706 were male, while 304 were female. Out of 2,010 persons reported missing, 2,008 were found while investigations continued to establish the whereabouts of two people.

Follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 25 of the concluding observations

CERD/C/RWA/CO/18-20

90. Rwanda has undertaken and continues to undertake several measures to implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance. Rwanda's unique historical context, particularly the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, has significantly influenced its approach to promoting national unity, reconciliation, and human rights.

91. During the post-genocide era, Rwanda adopted laws, starting with the Constitution, which contains provisions that enshrine the principles of equality and non-discrimination. The Constitution explicitly prohibits discrimination based on ethnicity, race, or any other ground. The GoR also adopted specific laws criminalizing and punishing the crime of genocide, its ideology, and the crimes of discrimination and sectarianism.

92. Specifically, during the period under consideration, the GoR adopted Law No. 68/2018 of 30/08/2018 determining offences and penalties in general, and Law No. 59/2018 of 22/8/2018 on the crime of genocide ideology and related crimes to punish genocide ideology, denial, divisions, and any act of discrimination. Efforts are in place to ensure their effective implementation.

93. Within the context of those laws, the following acts are punished in the framework of the ICERD provisions:

- Persecution against a person on political, ethnic, religious grounds or any other form of discrimination as constituting crimes against humanity.
- Act which inconveniences a person or a group of people or causes division among persons or a group of people on the basis of race, ethnicity, origin, clan, family connection, color of skin, sex, region, nationality, religion, political ideology, economic classes, culture, language, social status, physical or mental disability or physical appearance (Article 94 and 163 of 2018 Law on offences and penalties).

- Act aimed at denying a person or a group of people their rights granted under the Rwandan law or international conventions ratified by Rwanda, on the basis of race, ethnicity, origin, clan, family connection, colour of skin, sex, region, nationality, religion, political ideology, economic classes, culture, language, social status, physical or mental disability or physical appearance (Article 163 of 2018 Law on offences and penalties).
- Any person who makes use of speech, writing, or any other act which divide people or may set them against each other or cause civil unrest on the basis of discrimination, commits an offence under Rwandan laws, and is punished (Article 164 of 2018 Law on offences and penalties).

94. Rwanda established institutions such as the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) and the National Commission for the Fight against Genocide (CNLG), which played a crucial role in promoting unity and reconciliation among Rwandans. Both institutions conducted nationwide programs to foster social cohesion and address the root causes of division and discrimination. Since 2021, Rwanda has created the Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement (MINUBUMWE), which, as already indicated above, is entrusted with preserving historical memory, reinforcing national unity, and promoting citizenship, education, and culture. With the creation of MINUBUMWE, both NURC and CNLG were dissolved, and their mandates were transferred to MINUBUMWE.

95. During the past three decades, efforts have been made to support genocide survivors. In this regard, Rwanda established various programs to support survivors of the genocide, including access to healthcare, education, and financial assistance. The government worked with its partners, both local and international, to ensure that survivors received the support they needed to rebuild their lives.

96. Each year, Rwanda commemorates the genocide against the Tutsi through the “*Kwibuka*” events. These commemorative activities serve as a reminder of the consequences of hatred and division while also promoting a message of unity, reconciliation, and the need to combat all forms of discrimination.

97. International cooperation has been key in national efforts to combat genocide and its ideology, but more especially to track, arrest, and bring genocide fugitives to justice. In this regard, Rwanda worked with the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT), and different countries. Through this cooperation, the ICTR indicted 93 individuals, and 62 of them were sentenced. The cooperation also extended to individual countries, and as a result, 30 cases have been tried by nine countries; 30 other individuals have been extradited, deported, or referred from 11 countries and the ICTR.

98. However, remaining on international cooperation, the GoR wishes to note with concern that there is still reluctance in many countries when it comes to tracking, arresting, trying, or extraditing to Rwanda those arrested. At the time of submission of this report, over a thousand (1,089) indictments against genocide fugitives are still pending in 33 countries, most of them African and European countries.

99. Efforts continue to be made in the areas of education and awareness. In this regard, Rwanda has reformed its education system to promote national unity and social cohesion. This includes revising curricula to emphasize the history of the genocide, the importance of reconciliation, and the values of tolerance and inclusivity. Further, the government and its partners conduct regular public awareness campaigns to educate citizens about the dangers of racism, discrimination, and genocide ideology. These campaigns often involve community dialogues, media programs, and cultural events.

100. In March 2020, the GoR adopted a new visa regime that waives visa requirements and fees for African, Commonwealth, and Francophone countries. Citizens of all countries are eligible for a 30-day visa upon arrival without prior application and pay a prescribed visa fee. This indicates that Rwanda embraces humanity without any distinction or discrimination.

101. Further, Rwanda is a destination of choice for many foreigners, but also for refugees. The most recent population and housing census indicates that Rwanda hosts 117,375 resident foreigners. These include 59,916 males and 57,459 females.

Dialogue with civil society

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 27 of the concluding observations

CERD/C/RWA/CO/18-20

102. The GoR has adopted an open and inclusive approach to the implementation, monitoring, and reporting processes. The TBRTF has become more functional and active since 2016. The TBRTF is composed of government institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs), and the private sector. Development partners are also invited to some sessions. CSOs, particularly those working in the area of human rights, are involved right from the beginning. They participate in the development of the implementation plan. They contribute to the implementation based on their own internal planning and areas of operation. CSOs play an important role in monitoring the implementation. They take an active part, especially by participating in the information collection sessions. They are involved in the validation process. In addition to the above, CSOs have the right to produce their own alternative reports.

Amendment to article 8 of the Convention

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 28 of the concluding observations

CERD/C/RWA/CO/18-20

103. The GoR is still considering ratification of the amendment to article 8 (6) of the Convention.

Declaration under article 14 of the Convention

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 29 of the concluding observations

CERD/C/RWA/CO/18-20

104. The GoR is still considering the making of optional declaration under article 14 of the Convention.

Dissemination of information

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 32 of the concluding observations

CERD/C/RWA/CO/18-20

105. The report was made available on the website of MINIJUST. Recommendations were disseminated to government and public institutions as well as stakeholders.
