

REPUBLIC OF RWANDA



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

SPEECH OF THE RT. HON. PRIME MINISTER,

A. MUREKEZI,

**AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 4th BIENNIAL CONFERENCE
OF THE AFRICAN CORRECTIONAL SERVICES ASSOCIATION
(ACSA)**

Kigali Convention Centre, May 15th, 2017

- **Honourable Ministers,**
- **Chief of Army,**
- **Inspector General of RNP,**
- **Chairperson of the African Correctional Services Association (ACSA),**
- **Madam Representative of ICPA,**
- **Members of the ACSA Executive Committee,**
- **Commissioner Generals / Controllers / Director Generals of Corrections/Prisons, here present,**
- **Excellencies,**
- **Senior Officials here present,**
- **Distinguished Guests,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. On behalf of H.E Paul Kagame, The President of The Republic of Rwanda, I am pleased to preside over the opening Ceremony of the 4th Biennial Conference of ACSA that is taking place here in Rwanda, at Kigali Convention Centre.

2. First and foremost, I would like to convey to you all, heartfelt greetings and best wishes from our President Paul Kagame, and all the People of Rwanda. To all Participants from our Sister African Countries and those from outside Africa: please feel at home, amongst your brothers and sisters.

3. I strongly recommend you to find time before going back home, and visit some parts of Rwanda and witness the warm hospitality of Rwandans and our beautiful landscape. The Rwanda Correctional Service, RCS and its Partner institutions were tasked to ensure that you have productive and pleasant field visits.

4. The Government of Rwanda wishes to extend its special thanks to the Leadership of ACSA for having chosen Rwanda to host this year's five day Biennial Conference.

- **Honourable Ministers,**
- **Excellencies,**
- **Distinguished Guests,**

5. ACSA's mission and vision are very relevant to the entire African Continent. Indeed, as you all know, ACSA seeks to transform and harmonize strategies of Penal Institutions in Africa towards a collective and homogeneous development of Prisons. This is in line with the rebuilding of the self-reliance and dignity that we Africans are determined to achieve. It is also in line with the United Nations best practices that have to be aligned to our local context.

6. This common African resilient spirit was emphasized by H.E Paul Kagame, The President of The Republic of Rwanda who once said, I quote: "*We must also cooperate and speak with one voice, as a Continent. Whatever challenges we have, both collectively and in our respective Countries, are easier to address when we stay united*". End of quote.

7. Given today's challenges that are found in almost all African Correctional Services, especially budget constraints and lack of enough qualified staff, it is not easy to achieve ACSA mission. To overcome these challenges, all African Countries and the Private Sector as well as the Civil Society have the mandate to closely support ACSA.

8. To top up the budget that Governments allocate to it, ACSA is advised to cooperate with Governments to turn Prisons into Centers of production. I would like to remind you all that involving prisoners in income generating activities is beneficial to the prisoners themselves, their Correctional facilities and their Countries.

9. This year's ACSA Conference themed "*Building a Professional Correctional System in Africa: A Strategic Objective*", will help ACSA to reach conclusions on how African Correctional Services will become more professional. Sharing experience and best practices on prison management and governance from several Correctional Experts, Civil Society Practitioners, Researchers, Academicians, and other Experts, will inspire all Participants to this Conference, and therefore help to reach fruitful and constructive deliberations.

10. In the same direction, ACSA should focus more on cooperation with other International institutions that operate in the same field. Having Agreements and sharing experience with them will build the capacity of ACSA and make it a strong Professional Correctional System.

11. I thus urge all Participants to take full advantage of this Conference to foster deeper international cooperation among ACSA Member States and its Partners. The recommendations of this Conference will be key to ensuring that African Correctional Services are more professional, more productive and contribute better to wealth creation.

12. As far as Rwanda is concerned, I am pleased to inform you that our Government, in its efforts to improve the professional standards of the Rwanda Correctional Service, has embarked on a significant infrastructure development program.

13. For your information, after the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi that took the lives of more than one million people in three months, Rwanda's prisons were left overcrowded of individuals who were suspected of being genocide criminals.

14. With the choice of Rwandans to live as reconciled people, and after realising that keeping genocide criminals endlessly in prisons would not be the solution to our problems, Rwandans decided to abolish death penalty in 2007, and introduced Community Works (TIG) as an alternative penalty to imprisonment.

15. To improve the lives of prisoners, the Government of Rwanda subscribes all prisoners to a medical insurance scheme as part of its efforts to provide quality health care delivery to all Rwandans.

16. For Breastfeeding mothers in prison, they are given special treatment. I was happy to be informed that in your field trips you will both visit Ngoma Prison and Nyagatare Rehabilitation Centre. You will witness Rwanda's efforts to improve the lives of inmates.

17. However, though Rwanda has done a lot, we want to do more. We have not yet reached where we want to be. This is why Rwanda is eager to hear from your best practices and from experts' views to gather new ideas on how we can further modernize our Correctional Service.

- **Honourable Ministers,**
- **Chairperson of the African Correctional Services Association (ACSA),**
- **Madam Representative of ICPA,**
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18. To conclude my remarks, I would like to once again thank ACSA, for having organised its 4th Biennial Conference in Rwanda. I also wish to thank all Participants to this Conference.

19. Let's all continue to work together with strong determination to improve conditions of our African Correctional Services.

20. As H.E Nelson Mandela, who spent 27 years in prison, once put it, I quote: *"It is said that no one truly knows a Nation until one has been inside its jails. A Nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones."* End of quote.

21. With these Remarks, on behalf of H.E Paul Kagame, The President of The Republic of Rwanda, I declare the 2017 ACSA 4th Biennial Conference officially open.

Thank you,

God Bless you.
