

**Speech delivered by Ambassador Michael Ryan, Head of the
Delegation of the European Union to Rwanda**

**on the occasion of the Europe Day reception
9 May 2016, Kigali**

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- **Honourable Minister Louise Mushikiwabo, representing the Government of the Republic of Rwanda**
- **Honourable Ministers**
- **Members of Parliament**
- **Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Heads of Diplomatic Missions**
- **Senior officials**
- **Distinguished guests, friends, colleagues**

Mukara neza, a very warm welcome to all of you for joining us this evening in celebrating Europe Day in Rwanda. I extend this welcome to you on behalf of the ambassadors, High Commissioner, and heads of mission of the six Member States of the European Union resident in Rwanda, and Spain, whose ambassador presented his credentials this morning.

We are here to celebrate the European Union project, a remarkable achievement in establishing peace and stability, and to acclaim the European Union partnership with Rwanda.

Five years after the ending of the devastation of the Second World War, the Schuman Declaration was issued – on this day, 66 years ago – creating the European Coal and Steel Community, pooling coal and steel production of the six founding states which would – in the words of the Declaration – make war between historic rivals France and Germany "not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible". Today the European Union numbers 28 Member States in a unique

political and economic partnership among sovereign countries that has helped to promote peace, stability, and economic prosperity throughout the European continent, particularly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Our strength derives in part from the very special way that the 28 Member States continually, intimately meet to discuss how trade, agricultural, defence and security, and foreign policy can be harmonised, and its borders protected. There are distinct challenges, coping with economic recovery, and migration, to name two. As High Representative Federica Mogherini said today – we can deal with the challenges of international terrorism and migration – half a billion people can manage migration flows, protect lives, build partnerships. "The world needs a strong Europe more than ever". The strength of the Union derives from the foundations upon which it is based. "In no other place on earth is there so much freedom", said High Representative Mogherini, "freedom to speak your mind, freedom to move, freedom to pray or not to pray, to love, to vote, and freedom to choose your own destiny and to work to make it real".

A month ago here in Rwanda we commemorated the Genocide, and shared in the national grief and recollection of this awful tragedy, and drew comfort and inspiration from the reconciliation that has shaped this great country. The European Union has had the honour to accompany Rwanda in its reconstruction, sharing the fervent wish 'never again' should people suffer war and conflict.

Last year we agreed to focus European Union development assistance in energy, agriculture and governance, for a total of €460 million, most of it as budget support. I am pleased to say that tomorrow I will sign the first of these agreements - for energy. 2015 was European Year for Development. 2016 will be the year in which we will see these programmes begin in

concrete terms, and the first round of payments made. This is good news.

EU support to Rwanda extends to EU financial institutions. Rwanda is a beneficiary of European Investment Bank lending. The Bank is fully behind Rwanda's growth agenda, and has provided €23 millions for lending to small businesses, which are the dynamo of job creation and growth, services and manufacturing. The EIB will continue this support with a further €28 million to Bank of Kigali. The EIB is a key partner in Kigali's central sewage project, and in the Ruzizi 3 hydro-electric generating scheme, where the EU is playing a leading role in attracting private sector funding.

Ladies and gentlemen

Rwanda faces challenges. Overcoming poverty, bringing services to its citizens, improving nutrition of women and children, providing for a better future. Much has been accomplished, much remains to be done. The government has ambitious targets, including that of middle-income status in a few years' time. The European Union is playing its role. We have invested tens of millions of euros in fighting malnutrition. We are supporting farmers, the building of rural roads, rural electrification. I had the pleasure recently to open a potato processing plant, and a dairy factory. We will give our backing to better financial and budgetary management, to improving local government, to the Abunzi mediation system, to the Ombudsman's campaign against corruption, and to civil society groups, including those working in the area of governance and human rights.

The Economic Partnership Agreement between the East African Community and the European Union, initialled in October 2014, is on the way to full ratification. It has enormous potential for boosting trade and investment in Rwanda and its EAC neighbours, and with the European Union's over 500 million

consumers. The holding of the World Economic Forum for Africa this week in Kigali is testimony to the strong international commercial interest in Rwanda, and in this continent. ***Rwanda is the place to come and do business.***

Honourable Minister

Rwanda and the European Union are linked in a partnership that is close, mature and enduring. It is based on mutual respect and shared values, and the common quest for stability and security in the region. The positive role of Rwandan peace-keeping forces in Africa is appreciated, and is a credit to the discipline and courage of your armed forces. The generous welcome given to over 70,000 Burundi citizens fleeing political unrest and violence over the last 12 months is widely appreciated. The European Union and Member States have provided significant humanitarian support to these refugees in Rwanda and in neighbouring countries.

It is the enduring character of our relationship that we so value. Though we may disagree, such as over the Constitutional amendments introduced at the end of last year, ***our commitment to Rwanda's long term prosperity and stability is unshakeable.***

Dear friends

In the last few days Rwanda has suffered from torrential rains, and many have lost their lives from flooding. I wish to convey my condolences to the families of the victims, on behalf of the European Union. Our thoughts are with all those affected by the natural disaster.

Dear friends

I wish to say a few words to my staff at the EU Delegation, present among you tonight. Thank you for the professional and dedicated way in which each of you has helped to advance our

work in Rwanda. And thank you to all those who have helped make this event a memorable one, including my wife Maureen, and the families of our staff and diplomats.

Honourable Minister

Allow me to invite you and all our dear guests to raise their glasses and to present a toast to the excellent relations between Rwanda and the European Union, to the continued good health of His Excellency President Paul Kagame, and to the well-being of the people of Rwanda.
