

News release: Commemoration of the Rwanda Genocide

Asmara, April 07, 2013: The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Eritrea in partnership with Government the State of Eritrea (GoSE) marks the International Day to remember the victims of the Rwanda Genocide. The event was organized to pay tribute the victims of the genocide.



Participants rallied at Expo Ground, a prominent setup for Eritrean festivals, to start with a “Walk to Remember”. Speaking to participants during the opening of the walk, UNAIDS Country Coordinator, Mr. Odallo who was also Master of Ceremony, explained the objectives of the walk as being to promote awareness of genocide, and empower participants to take an active stance against genocide and its causes whilst giving a message of hope for the survivors.

The walk was formally kicked off by the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator Ms. Christine N. Umutoni and Ambassador Fessehazion Petros, Director General at Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The participants escorted by Police traffic motorbikes marched to Hotel Asmara Palace where the main event was held. During the walk, Government Ministers, Ambassadors, UN Heads of Agencies, and staff, and invited guests from various Government institutions and civil society organizations were present.



In 1994, Rwanda became known to the world community for the wrong reasons. There was a genocide claiming at least 800,000 innocent civilian lives, mostly ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus, over a period of just 100 days from April 7 to Mid July 1994.

While welcoming the participants at the official venue-Asmara Place- the MC on behalf of the organizing committee extended gratitude to the people and Government of Eritrea for facilitating this important event.



Participants lighting up candles



The RC and Amba Fessehazion lighting up candles

“We thank all of you for having left everything you were doing on Sunday evening and come to pay respect to the victims of the genocide”, he said.

After prayers for the victims of the genocide, all participants stood to observe a moment of silence in honor of the victims. This was followed by candle lighting to pay respect and tribute to the victims. Documentary film, music and video clip on Rwanda genocide were also screened and a choir from National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students (NUEYS) sang several peace songs and recited poems both in English and Tigrinya languages. One of the songs presented by the choir during the event was:
 We are the children, walking hand in hand;
 We are the children watch us as we stand;
 For liberty and freedom, peace and brotherhood;
 We are children, we stand for good.



The RC Ms Christine N Umutoni reading the UNSG message of the day



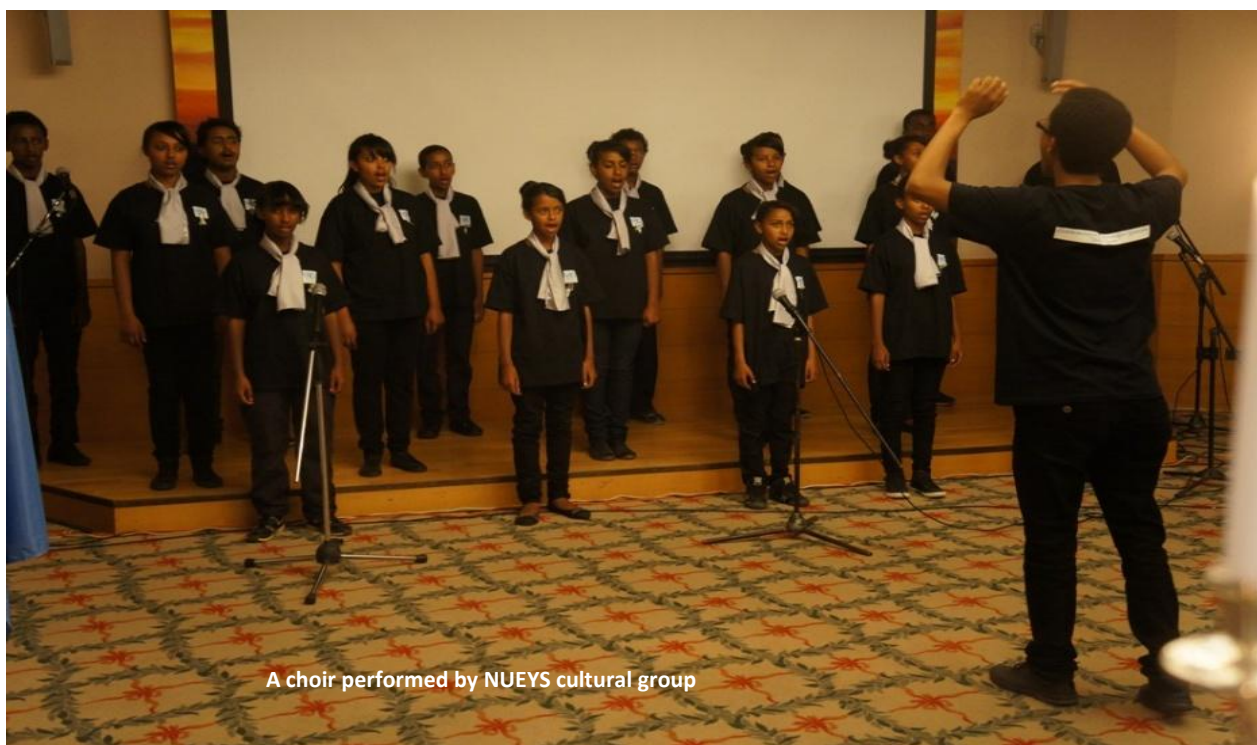
Amb. Fessehazion making remarks

Speaking to the gathering, the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator, Ms. Christine N. Umutoni, thanked the government of Eritrea and all present for their support and solidarity. She read the UN Secretary General’s message. The UN Secretary General’s message highlighted that Rwanda is forging on a new path, progressing towards more peaceful and just society. The Secretary General called on member states to uphold their obligations under international laws regarding abuses and protection of their populations.

She also added that as Rwandese she can testify to the horror that befell her country during the Genocide as people were killed in the cruelest manner. She thanked the leadership of Rwanda- under leadership of Paul Kagame for having done what seemed impossible in rallying the people to unite, reconcile and rebuild the nation.

Representing the Government of the State of Eritrea, Ambassador Fesehazion Petros of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed solidarity of the people and Government of Eritrea with the Rwandan people in their resilience and efforts to recover from the devastating effects of horrific events.

The Ambassador further stated that “April 07 is a reminder to all of us individually or collectively to shoulder our responsibilities and to renew our commitments not to allow such slaughter of human beings, as the one that took place in Rwanda in 1994”. He emphasized that “we must say Never Again with one voice”.



A choir performed by NUEYS cultural group

Giving her concluding remarks of the event, the UNCHR Representative in Eritrea Ms. Monica Sandri thanked the participants, Government, and the diplomatic corps for participating in the event.. She called for unity in memory of those who lost their lives during this tragic and dark period in the history of humanity. Their memory is not in vain if we all resolve to work for peace.

The United Nations 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (known as the “Genocide Convention”) defines genocide as any crimes committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, national, ethnical, racial or religious groups.



UNCHR Rep delivering concluding remarks

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