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PRESS RELEASE

Rwanda hosts AU-EU Ministerial Meeting amid a crackdown on opposition and independent media

Kigali, 25th October 2021, The Rwandan political opposition working inside Rwanda has learnt with interest about the AU/EU ministerial meeting taking place in Rwanda from 25th to 26th October 2021. We commend the thematic areas that will be covered during the discussions, namely:

- the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic
- building resilience
- investing in the digital and green transitions
- peace, security, and global governance
- migration and mobility
- education, science, technology, and skills development

While we commend all these areas of partnership, we would like to draw the attention of participating countries and institutions on one area that we believe is vital for the rest to succeed which is the area of “peace, security and global governance.” While Europe takes peace, security, and good governance for granted this is not the case everywhere in Africa.

You will agree with us that democracy, respect for political and civil rights are prerequisite for peace and security hence the adoption of the universal declaration of human rights in 1948 at the end of the Second World War. Indeed, in its preamble it is stated: *“Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law.”* And indeed, as The UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Maina Kiai gave a warning on Rwanda in his June 2014 address to the Human Rights Council, *“a society without room for critical voices to speak freely and peacefully is unsustainable”*

We do acknowledge that the Rwandan government has made commendable advances in certain areas but has fallen far short of expectations in meeting minimum standards in terms of respecting political and civil rights of its citizens, key to durable peace and economic development.

For example, the government has conducted a crackdown on opposition and independent media ahead of this important Meeting. Seven key members of DALFA Umurinzi political party led by Mrs Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza, her assistant and one independent journalist have been arrested since the 13th of October 2021. Mrs Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza has also been summoned by the Rwandan Investigation Bureau (RIB) for questioning on 19th and 21st October 2021. She must return there this Monday, October 25 October 2021.

On January 25, 2021, at the meeting of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, many countries called on Rwanda to end torture and ill-treatment, and investigate cases of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, and deaths in custody. Rwanda received 284 recommendations from ninety-nine countries. It accepted 160 recommendations, noted seventy-five.



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We believe lack of respect of political and civil rights constitutes a serious obstacle to good governance needed to deliver sustainable development in Rwanda. Citizens are refrained from objectively participating in developmental decision of our country for fear of government retributions. The repercussion is that societal trust is weakened and achieving sustainable development in Rwanda decelerated.

The government of Rwanda and the World Bank Group jointly published study of 2017 [on future drivers of growth in](#) Rwanda has affirmed that for Rwanda to becoming a modern, competitive, and middle-income economy, it should improve its state efficiency and accountability. This is given especially that not non resource rich country has reached high income levels without highly capable and accountable institutions of governance. Thus, the study emphasises on Rwanda developing its societal trust as a core element underpinning state effectiveness and long-term development.

Crackdown on members of the opposition and independent media does not lead Rwanda towards achieving its desired development. We are convinced that implementing of governance reforms in Rwanda through an inter Rwandan dialogue between the Rwandan government, its political opposition and civil society organisations operating within and outside Rwanda as we proposed in [the Road Map to a promising future of Rwanda](#) submitted for consideration to Rwandan authorities in June 2021, would lead to peace and reconciliation, prerequisites for genuine and sustainable development.

We are therefore appealing to AU and EU representatives to support our road map proposal for a promising future for Rwanda and persuade the leadership of Rwanda to hold a Highly Inclusive Inter Rwandan dialogue. This should not pose any problem because constant quest for solutions through dialogue and consensus is one of the fundamental principles of the Rwandan constitution.

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