



**FDU-INKINGI**  
**Forces Démocratiques Unifiées**  
**United Democratic Forces**



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**COMITE DIRECTEUR – STEERING COMMITTEE**

*"Pour un Etat de Droit, la Démocratie et l'Egalité de chances" ; "For the rule of law, democracy and equal opportunity"*

## **New Year message 2019 by Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza, President of FDU-Inkingi**

**Fellow Rwandans,  
Friends of Rwanda,  
Compatriots in the struggle for democracy in Rwanda,  
Dear colleagues of FDU-Inkingi,  
And our friends,**

Let me begin by expressing my great pleasure of being able to communicate directly with you after 8 years that I spent in prison. As we are all aware, the circumstances in which I find myself in do not permit me to go around visiting you where you are. But I am with you in spirit.

I praise God for keeping me strong and me thank you all for your generous support. All these efforts have been instrumental in making me strong morally and physically thus empowering me to withstand the hardships that I went through. Let me take this opportunity to state publicly that I survived the 8 years in prison due to three main reasons.

- First, my belief in a better Rwanda gave me the courage to remain focussed on that purpose;
- Second, it was my belief in God; I believe that God has a good plan for Rwanda and that Rwandans are His agents to implement it.
- Third it was due to the determined and courageous support I received from my family, from my fellow Rwandans, friends of Rwanda and from my FDU-Inkingi family. Allow me to thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

### **Sisters and brothers, dear compatriots:**

When you look back to where we have come from, we have made significant achievements our difficulties notwithstanding. Inside our country Rwanda we have continued to mobilise Rwandans based on our vision of a democratic, reconciled and prosperous Rwanda. Furthermore, this is a vision that calls for the supremacy for the rule of law, respect of human rights and for the creation of conditions in which Rwandan women and men can create wealth for themselves and for their families without any hindrance.

Within our modest means and persistent official harassment, FDU-Inkingi still stands firm. For this I thank FDU and friends in diaspora that have sacrificed their time and financial resources to sustain our work in a hostile environment in our country. Even more importantly we must acknowledge

and appreciate the enormous sacrifice of our FDU family in Rwanda. These men and women have toiled day and night under humiliation, harassment, beatings, imprisonment, disappearance and even death. I would like to mention in particular, our 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Boniface Twagirimana, who forcedly disappeared from Mpanga maximum security prison, Habarugira Jean Damascene, murdered in May 2017, our Secretary General Sylvain Sibomana languishing in prison for the last 6 years and 8 other FDU-Inkingi members who are held in prison for more than one year without trial. None of these hard conditions discouraged our people to fight on and live another day for something they truly believe in, which is a united, reconciled Rwanda, living under the rule of law, democracy and equal opportunity.

**Dear compatriots, friends:**

Many of you know very well that the work of an opposition party is not to fight government but to make a government in power accountable to the people by highlighting areas where it is going wrong and to propose to the people an alternative policy. We are not an enemy of the state but servants of the people like the government is.

While we criticise the government, we are prepared to support projects that really serve the national interest and meet the real needs of the people but we will not hesitate to criticise the government where it goes wrong and to show the people where and how we can do better. It is very unfortunate that the successive governments spend more time trying to destroy what has been done by previous governments rather than consolidating successes made by previous governments, correcting what is wrong and focussing on meeting new challenges.

I am very pleased that the French language has been reintroduced in the Rwandan schools because this will give back to Rwanda its rightful opportunity to serve as a link between francophone and English-speaking countries and to become once again the heart of Africa.

Allow me therefore to make a few remarks on where we should be going. From my understanding, our way forward is straightforward and self-explanatory. Our task is to build all the broken parts of our society that was reduced to bystanders rather than being active participants in the decision-making process through undemocratic regimes in our country. In this noble and challenging journey ahead of us we need to fix what I call the five Ds, which are as follows.

**1. Depleted social capital**

By social capital we mean relationships, trust, norms and habits that hold society together. It is an open secret that the social capital has been seriously depleted. Children report parents, wives report husbands and vice versa, neighbours spy on neighbours to report them to government. These are some of the actions that instil fear in people and prevent them from expressing critical views to government. They fear to be accused of fighting government plans or to be labelled as enemies of the state. Mistrust is so high within the Rwandan family and the loss of the sense of the sacredness of human life so low that someone now kills a partner so easily because they no longer have a strong bond. Therefore, it is vital for us to rebuild the social capital. The state does not exist for its own sake. It must act quickly to fix this problem. The state must help improve the welfare of

the family and trust within families because the family is the foundation of any meaningful development.

## **2. Demilitarisation of the state**

For the last 45 years (1973-2018) those born during this period, the great majority of Rwandans have only known regimes that came to power by military force. The management of society has been top-down where citizens have only to obey orders from above without adding an input in decisions that concern them. We can pretend not to see this naked reality.

Our vision is to reverse the trend and build strong democratic governance characterised by transparency and accountability from the leadership. We must put in place mechanisms that promote the culture of democratic competition for and peaceful transfer of power. We should never allow the concentration of power in the hands of one man or a small group of men who are not constitutionally accountable to the people.

## **3. Decentralisation of power**

We need to ensure that citizens have a say in decisions that concern them. The imposition of programmes on the people simply because they come from above must stop. It is important to acknowledge that citizens should not obey blindly orders handed down by government officials. Citizens should not fear to bring their leaders and public officials to account for what they have done. The voice of the citizen must be heard. The habit of demeaning them saying that their level of understanding is too low to contribute anything must stop.

## **4. Development**

Regarding development, let us regret the fact that only 17 countries that are poorer than Rwanda. Currently, our income per capita is \$748 per year according World Bank, that means that on the average unemployed Rwandan earns \$46 a month which means that a Rwandan earns \$1, 87 a day which is under the international poverty bottom line of \$1,90. According to EICV 5 - Rwanda Poverty Profile Report 2016/17 more than 38% of Rwandans live with less than 0.5 € / day. In other words, we are among the poorest of the poor in the world.

There is poverty everywhere in the country. The cost of living is very high. Citizens are unable to afford all the taxes that they are asked to pay. The situation is reversing economic progress. This is one of the reasons for the high level of homicides in families.

Any government that has its people at heart must focus on the welfare of its citizens instead of putting up wonderful buildings in the cities, buying planes and chasing the poor out of the capital in order to hoodwink foreigners that the country is all clean and rich. Where do you want those people to go? How will they survive? We call on the government to reduce the extreme economic disparities between rich and poor.

## **5. Diplomacy**

It is an open secret that our country does not have good relations with her neighbours. We cannot ignore the fact that the root cause is the existence of refugees in those countries who are

suspected of threatening the stability of the countries of origin. Therefore, that problem will never find a lasting solution without involving refugees in finding a solution to that problem.

We must enhance peaceful coexistence with neighbours using the political arrangements that we have within our region. It is important to accelerate the process of political and commercial integration for the benefit of the people of the region.

In terms of international diplomacy, we will put pressure on the government to promote a policy of peaceful coexistence and peaceful resolution of conflicts.

**Brothers and sisters:**

In conclusion, as an old Chinese saying goes the journey of one thousand miles begins with one step: Eight years ago, we took the 1<sup>st</sup> step to demonstrate that we are serious in our demand for democracy in Rwanda. There is no better demonstration of our resolve than the will power of our members who have accepted prison rather than renouncing their legitimate demand for democratic Rwanda. Together friends, supporters both inside and outside Rwanda we have continued to walk towards our vision, and we shall continue to walk. It will not be an easy task and there should be no illusion about that. One thing is clear there is no turning back, no imprisonment, harassment and/or humiliation will divert us from our purpose of seeking a better Rwanda: a truly reconciled and democratic country, buttressed by the rule of law, mutual respect and equal opportunity in accessing national resources.

Brothers and sisters, colleagues and friends, I wish you a happy New Year 2019.

May God bless you and all your dreams come true.

All together we shall come out victorious

Done in Kigali on December 31, 2018.

Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza

President FDU-Inkingi