



**PLATFORM AMAHORO PC – FDU INKINGI – PDP IMANZI – PS IMBERAKURI – RWANDA NATIONAL CONGRESS (RNC)**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA WONDERFUL IDEA BUT NEEDS PEACE, SECURITY, DEMOCRACY AND GOOD POLITICAL GOVERNANCE TO SUCCEED**

The Rwandan political opposition, which is composed of *Amahoro People's Congress - United Democratic Forces (FDU –Inkingi)*; *PDP - Imanzi*; *PS Imberakuri*; *Rwanda National Congress (RNC)* commends the political will of African Governments to reach an agreement on the establishment of an African Continental free trade area and the protocol on free movement of persons. The benefits are quite evident, and it is indeed long overdue as the process started almost 40 years ago with the signing of the Lagos Plan of Action in 1980 and the adoption of the Abuja treaty in 1991, establishing the African Economic Community which was to culminate in the establishment of an Africa common market. We would like also to thank HE Mahamadou Issoufou of Niger most sincerely for leading this process.

Rwandans, probably more than any other Africans are quite pleased with the protocol on free movement of people, goods, capital and services as Rwanda has become an open prison where citizens are choosing to live on their knees to avoid prison, exile or being killed for criticising government. African countries would greatly profit from the investments of Rwandan businessmen, persecuted for their unwillingness to be part of the omnipresent ruling party business empire “Crystal ventures” and from the skilled labour excluded through cronyism. It would be an opportunity for those who are forced into acts of violent repression, to escape and help identify hit squads sent abroad to eliminate critics.

Freedom House report 2016 considers Rwanda a non-free country with 8/40 score in terms of political rights. Reporters without Borders 2017 ranks Rwanda as 159 out of 180 countries surveyed, and 46 out of the 54 African countries. The Rwandan state is now called “an army with a state rather than “a state with an army”, because of the central role of the army in running the state. The army is also called or an “army without borders “because of assassination and attempted assassinations of critics across borders. The latest assassination attempt in London on a British citizen of Rwandan origin was foiled by the British Police hardly two weeks before the African Union Summit. A peaceful demonstration of Congolese refugees in which 11 refugees according to UNHCR happened hardly one month before the summit.

However, we also fully understand the points made by South Africa, Nigeria and others who have not signed, because as democratic countries, consultations must take place and laws reviewed before agreements are signed. Notwithstanding the legal and constitutional implications, we strongly believe that there are basic pillars to support and make the agreement a success story namely, peace, security, democracy and good political governance as contained in the Durban Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance” (July 2002). The signatories undertook “to work with renewed determination to enforce’, among other things, the rule of law; the equality of all citizens before the law; individual and collective freedoms; the right to participate in free, credible and democratic political processes; and adherence to the separation of powers, including protection for the independence of the judiciary and the effectiveness of parliaments”. The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) was then created in 2003 “to ensure that the policies and practices of participating states conform to the agreed political, economic and corporate governance values, codes and standards.

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*La Plateforme P5 est une coalition des organisations politiques AMAHORO P.C, FDU - INKINGI, PDP - IMANZI, PS - IMBERAKURI ET RWANDA NATIONAL CONGRESS (RNC); The platform P5 is a coalition of political organizations AMAHORO P.C, FDU - INKINGI, PDP - IMANZI, PS - IMBERAKURI and RWANDA NATIONAL CONGRESS (RNC); Plateforme P5 ni urugaga rw'amashyaka n'imitwe ya politiki AMAHORO P.C, FDU - INKINGI, PDP - IMANZI, PS - IMBERAKURI n'IHURIRO NYARWANDA (RNC);*

In this regard that even though it is a pride for Rwandans that such an important agreement on free trade is signed in Rwanda, the Rwandan government was the wrong choice to organise this summit as its political values and practices are quite opposite to the values of the Durban declaration. Just to give a few examples, the Country Review Report of the Republic of Rwanda 2006 by African Peer Review mechanism pointed out that “while the Rwandan Constitution guarantees freedom to form, join and belong to political parties, it simultaneously undermines that freedom by attaching onerous conditions, such as political parties not being able to operate at the grassroots below the provincial levels which effectively “amounts to a denial of much political activity to citizens, as most people reside at the district, sector and cell levels”. The situation has worsened since that time. In the run up to 2010 presidential elections, several political leaders of the political opposition and journalists were arrested, murdered or forced into exile. FDU-Inkingi party was refused to register and its leader Mrs Ingabire Umuhoza Victoire was arrested and has been sentenced to 15-years in jail. The African Court for Human and People’s rights ruled that her rights were violated during the trial and called for reparations, but the government is still adamant to execute the ruling. Another lady Ms Diane Rwigara who attempted to run against President Kagame in 2017 presidential elections is in prison.

In order to bring about national conciliation and durable peace in Rwanda, the report of International panel of eminent personalities commissioned by the Organisation of African Unity (2000) recommended among other things to set up an international investigation to establish the identity of the perpetrator of the terrorist act of downing a civil aircraft carrying two serving heads of State of Rwanda and Burundi and their entire entourage. They had concluded that this criminal act had triggered genocide against Tutsi in 1994 and spilled over into the Democratic Republic of Congo where more than 5 million Congolese and 200,000 Hutu refugees were killed (UN mapping report, 2010). There has been no follow up. These numbers are bigger than the population of some member countries. By sweeping under the carpet the monstrosity of these killings, people outside of Africa doubt about African commitment to the respect of the sacredness of human life and wellbeing of our people.

In terms of regional stability, it an open secret that Rwanda has become an epicentre of regional destabilisation particularly for Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo. We commend the government of South Africa, Tanzania and Malawi who sent troops to the DRC to end the human tragedy caused by the murderous armed group M23 formed and supported by Rwanda. Furthermore, UN reports have accused the Rwandan regime of providing “*training to Burundi refugees to facilitate their participation in armed groups seeking to overthrow through violent means the Government of Burundi*” in total violation of AU Principles and the provisions of the UN Charter. The absence or level of representation at the summit by the neighbours should be an eye-opener with regard to the relations between those countries and their implications on the agreement.

The Rwandan Opposition political platform warmly welcomes an adoption of the African continental free trade area and the protocol on free movement of people, goods and capital. However noble our ideals are, unless the pillars of peace within and between states, security, democracy and good political governance are built and African leaders dare tell each other the truth as former South African President Mbeki pointed out, the ideal of common market will remain a dream. Democracy allows innovation because a country can benefit from the full energy and talent of its citizens and from the unconstrained flow of ideas that accompanies it. It is our sincere hope that the forces of good for Africa will prevail.

Done in London on March 23, 2018

Justin Bahunga  
Chair Diplomacy Commission – P5-Platform  
[infocomrelext@fdu-rwanda.com](mailto:infocomrelext@fdu-rwanda.com); Phone: +44-7988-883-576