

Statement by Russia at Security Council Meeting on: Threat to International Peace and Security:
Prevention and Fight Against Genocide

16 April 2014
(Unofficial Transcript)

I would like to thank Mr. Jan Eliasson and Mr. Keating for their briefings. We listened with great emotion and attention to the statement made by the representative of Rwanda.

Today we remember the tragic events of 1994 in Rwanda, which for the past 20 years have evoked in the international community not only a feeling of horror, but also a deep sense of guilt for the slaughter that took place at end of the twentieth century — events that could and should have been prevented. The history of the last century, and especially the terrible lessons of the Second World War, should have taught us that signs of genocide must be fought with resolve and without pandering to those who espouse a xenophobic ideology for short-term political goals. The Russian people, some of whom were sentenced by the Nazis, like many other peoples were, to physical annihilation, paid a ghastly price — the lives of tens of millions of fallen soldiers and civilians, women, the elderly and children.

It seems that humankind has not learned the bloody lessons of history. Nazi criminals were tried and, as a result of the victory over fascism, we established a new international system. The 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the 1968 Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity were adopted. They have allowed certain actions to be qualified as genocide and ensured that there is legal accountability for them.

Nevertheless, in the late twentieth century, the international community was able neither to recognize in time the signs of distress coming from a small African country, nor to rescue its people. One of the most horrifying instances of genocide occurred before our eyes with almost complete inaction on the part of the United Nations. How was that possible? In 1994, there was already a United Nations peacekeeping Mission in Rwanda. Why was it powerless in the face of the horrific bloodshed that led to the genocide?

We believe that the answer to those questions lies in the conclusions of the report of the commission to carry out an independent inquiry into the actions of the United Nations during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda (see S/1999/1257, annex), which was created in the wake of the Rwandan tragedy. The commission came to the conclusion that the main reason for the United Nations total failure to prevent the genocide was that States, and even the itself Organization itself, lacked sufficient political will for decisive action, even though all the necessary instruments and the legal basis required for making decisions already existed.

However, somebody raised the issue of protecting staff in the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda or helping to save their compatriots who were in the country. Someone thought first and foremost about their internal political needs and someone thought about maintaining their political influence in the country. And someone simply did not pay sufficient attention to the horrifying news coming from Kigali, attributing it instead to the particularities of

the African continent. Indeed, the United Nations betrayed Rwanda and the cost of that betrayal was approximately 1 million human lives.

What conclusion can we draw today as we commemorate such a tragic anniversary? We must continue the work being carried out by the United Nations to correct our mistakes. Yet such mistakes continue to be made, as evidenced by what is being proposed by several Security Council members with regard to the establishment of a United Nations mission in Syria, which would somehow supposedly stop the violence and give the Security Council more objective information on what is going on there.

It is important to stop using political forces that preach nationalistic and sometimes extremist ideas for short-term goals. It is important to understand once and for all that a policy of accommodating such forces can lead to the most tragic and destructive results. It was no surprise that the need to protect and promote the fundamental rights of minorities, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, race or religion, was raised yet again at the recent International Conference on Genocide Prevention in Brussels. Similarly, the importance of measures to prevent incitement to violence based on ethnic or religious hatred was also underscored.

We call on all countries to effectively strengthen international and regional cooperation to achieve those goals in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. That should be the focus of the Secretariat, particularly of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide. In that context, determining genuine priorities and appropriate goals is highly important. Theoretical research, when truly necessary, should be fully integrated into the framework of existing international legal foundations.

Today as we mourn with the people of Rwanda, we should remember that our fragile world requires our joint efforts in order to meet its current challenges.