

# **Kigali ACP Congress**

**Kigali October 20, 2016**

## **REMARKS BY THE CEO RGB**

**Ambassador Mamour Jagne**, Representative of the Secretary-General of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group States;

**Union H.E Michael Ryan**, Ambassador of the European;

**Mr. Jaroslaw Wlodarczyk**, Secretary General of the International Associations of Press Clubs;

**Mr Safari Gaspard**, President of Kigali Press Club

**Mr. Andrew Mold**, Representative of One UN Resident Coordinator

Representative of different media associations & bodies

Esteemed media partners and stakeholders,

All protocol observed, Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me pleasure to be part of this highly important assembly bringing together representatives of media professional bodies from Africa, Caribbean and Pacific(ACP) member states, representatives of press clubs from around the world, media practitioners and stakeholders all gathered here in Kigali.

Allow me to extend sincere appreciation, on the behalf of the government of Rwanda and on my behalf, to the forerunners of the project for choosing Rwanda to host this event at the initiative of the Kigali Press Club which is also the host of this conference, bringing together seniors journalists from more than 30 countries. I am told this conference paves way to a much bigger event; the General Assembly of the International Associations of Press Clubs, expected to be held here in Kigali in the near future. Rwanda means a very big land where there is enough place for everybody, especially good visitors like you.

Let me take this opportunity to welcome you all to the “*Land of a thousand hills, a thousand smiles and a thousand opportunities.*”

It is a pleasure for Rwanda to be selected to host this assembly where the ACP Press Clubs Federation is expected to adopt its charter, I am told. This federation will represent the ACP region in upcoming General Assembly of the International Associations of Press Clubs.

The event will be the first ever such a meeting to be convened on the African continent and in the ACP as a whole. The decision to choose Rwanda to host this event remains for us a significant gesture.

## **Esteemed participants**

The media remains unarguably a vital driver of sustainable development and a major pillar of democracy and good governance. However, as experience has shown, the media in Africa and in other developing countries has been used for years as a tool by selfish people to pursue their own selfish interests to the detriment of the society. We, in Rwanda, relate much more to such an awful experience, as we recall the role the media played in propagating an ideology of hatred that led to the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi.

On the other hand, the weakness of media in Africa and in other developing countries is neither a legacy nor a fatality. It is time for the media in the ACP region to wake up and position itself in the global landscape to accurately tell our own story.

Rwanda has adopted citizen-centred development through revitalising the principles of good governance which include; the rule of law, accountability, transparency and efficient service delivery. We are convinced that the media is an important tool in driving this development path forward.

## **Ladies and gentlemen,**

In 2011, the Government of Rwanda sanctioned a review of the media policy with the aim to create an environment which allows for a free, independent and vibrant media industry. This new move triggered robust media reforms in 2013, which saw the media law amended, with the major direction of adopting self-regulation, and enacting the Access to Information law, making Rwanda the 11<sup>th</sup> country in Africa to put in place such a law. The liberalisation of the media law that provided more media freedom, led to significant rapid growth of the media sector both in investment and the number of media houses operating in the country. From one TV station in 1994, we now have 12 local TV stations, 36 radios, over 80 online daily publications. There may be a different narrative and opinion outside there, but evidence shows us a growing and free to operate media sector, though as in the rest of the world is not devoid of some challenges.

## **Esteemed participants,**

Rwanda is signatory to the Cotonou Agreement establishing the ACP block and totally adheres to its "Raison d'être" which is normally to promote and expedite the economic, cultural and social development of the member states, with a view to contributing to peace and security and to promoting stable and democratic political environment. Therefore, it is a shared responsibility for all member states to strengthen the media sector in order to enhance its contribution towards the achievement of our intended developmental goals. Journalists and media owners are also citizens of their homelands. This means we are also part of the critical mass and responsible to find solutions to our problems.

## **Representative of the Secretary-General of the African, Caribbean and the Pacific**

## **Esteemed delegates and participants**

As I read from the program on the discussions you will hold here, I commend, on behalf of the government of Rwanda, this initiative to form the ACP-Press Clubs federation as a network of all national press clubs or/press associations to strengthen the viability and professionalism of the bodies in these regions. It is my conviction that this federation, once efficiently operational, will play a significant role in leading the ACP block to its goals and promote the visibility of its endeavours by contributing to creating a strong media industry within member states, dedicated and ready to position the ACP block globally.

Governments would expect ACP-Press Clubs Federation to stand as a strong body, capable of fostering democracy and able to position the media within member states to an array of biases and misconceptions usually tailored by some probably fewer Western media vis-à-vis media in the developing countries. It also provides an opportunity to network among member states on a number of issues of mutual interest.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate the commitment of the government of Rwanda to his initiative. We shall continue to work closely with The Kigali Press Club and offer them the necessary support in our means to be able to fulfil their mandate. I also appreciate the work done by the Kigali Press Club to bring this very important conference to the city of Kigali. They are young as organization but stand strong in experience and capacity. We can only pledge our support to KPC's commitment and our readiness to work with you all here to advance your agendas, which I believe will always spur development and prosperity to our nations.

Last but not least, I take the pleasure to declare this conference open and wish you fruitful deliberations as you enjoy the fresh atmosphere of the beautiful city of Kigali.

I declare this ACP Press Clubs Conference officially opened in Kigali.

**I thank you**