Republic of Rwanda
Ministry of Environment

Statement by the Republic of Rwanda

Expert-Level Meeting on: "Synergies between the African Union Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) policy and the UN peacebuilding Architecture: Conflict prevention as a Model

New York, November 16th 2026

Excellencies, Dear colleagues,

Thank you to the African Union Observer Mission and the Permanent Mission of Egypt for bringing us together, as we commemorate PCRD month.

For Rwanda, the link between reconstruction and prevention is rooted in our history. After the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, we had to rebuild a country whose institutions and social fabric had been devastated.

We needed to restore services, rebuild the economy, deliver justice and rebuild trust; while people had to find a way to live together again and see a future they could share.

Our experience has taught us that these efforts are closely connected. It has also taught us that reconstruction must be shaped and carried forward by the people themselves.

This is the perspective I would like to bring to our discussion.

National ownership is a guiding principle of the UN peacebuilding architecture. In practice, it means that countries lead in defining their priorities, but it also means that citizens have a meaningful role in shaping solutions and making them work.

Gacaca is an important example of this from Rwanda's experience.

After the genocide, the number of cases was overwhelming; the justice system had lost much of its capacity. Survivors needed justice, families needed to know what had happened to their loved ones, and communities needed a way to confront crimes committed among neighbours.

Rwanda drew on a traditional community-based approach and adapted it to this immense challenge. Through Gacaca, a grass-root justice system, community members could give testimony and contribute to establishing the truth. The process helped deliver accountability and supported the difficult work of reconciliation.

It was a painful and demanding undertaking, and reconciliation remains work that must be sustained across generations.

The lesson for this discussion is that national circumstances matter. Countries need space to develop responses grounded in their realities. Those responses must uphold accountability and human rights, and they must also involve the people most affected.

This connects directly to the PCRD pillar on human rights, transitional justice and reconciliation.

Public participation also became part of Rwanda's wider reconstruction and development journey. Which I will explain through three examples.

The first is **Abunzi**, which means mediators.

When people have a dispute, they can bring it to a local mediation committee. The mediators hear those involved and help them seek a resolution. This gives people a way to address certain disputes close to home.

Its relevance to prevention is practical.

People need somewhere to take their grievances. They need a process through which they can be heard and seek a fair resolution before tensions grow.

The second is **Umuganda**, our community work programme.

People come together to work on something their community needs. This might involve cleaning a neighbourhood, improving a shared space or supporting local infrastructure.

There is a visible result from the work itself. There is also value in the process. Neighbours meet, work together and take responsibility for a place they share.

The third is **Umushyikirano**, our National Dialogue Council.

It brings citizens and leaders together to discuss the country's priorities. Citizens can raise concerns and ask questions about issues affecting their lives. Leaders have an opportunity to hear those concerns and respond.

These mechanisms have different functions. Together, they show what participation can look like in daily life: resolving a dispute, improving a neighbourhood or questioning a public decision.

They also connect to political governance and transition.

Rebuilding institutions involves establishing ways for people to engage with them. Citizens need channels to express concerns, institutions need the capacity to respond, and commitments need follow-up.

For us, this is an important part of national ownership. National leadership gives direction. Public participation helps connect that direction to people's needs and experiences.

Women's leadership has been central to this journey.

Women helped rebuild families, communities and livelihoods after the genocide. They have also helped shape public institutions and national decisions.

Their contribution belongs throughout our discussion on reconstruction. It is relevant to justice, governance, economic recovery and security.

The PCRD pillar on Women, Peace and Security gives this a clear place in the AU framework. It also connects with the UN peacebuilding architecture's commitment to women's participation and leadership.

The practical question is whether women can influence decisions. Can they help define priorities? Can they access resources? Can women-led organizations bring community concerns into national discussions?

These questions matter for prevention. Women's organizations and local networks bring knowledge of the communities they serve. Their concerns need to reach those responsible for taking action.

Young people must also have opportunities to participate. Their livelihoods and confidence in the future will help determine how peace is sustained.

What, then, should the AU and the UN take from these experiences?

First, support should begin with nationally identified priorities and build on institutions and community mechanisms that already exist.

Partners should understand how those mechanisms work. They should ask where support would be useful and coordinate their contributions. This

would help countries spend more time implementing their priorities and less time managing separate processes.

Second, early warning must lead to early action.

Rwanda knows the consequences of warnings that do not produce a response. The international community failed to prevent the Genocide against the Tutsi despite warnings and a UN presence on the ground.

When threats emerge, there must be clarity about who is responsible for acting. This includes responding to hate speech, incitement to violence and other signs of growing division.

Community concerns must also inform that response. Local mediation, dialogue and women's networks can help identify tensions. National institutions and international partners must be prepared to listen and act within their responsibilities.

Third, financing must reflect the time this work takes.

Reconciliation does not end when a project closes. Institutions need time to earn trust and strengthen their capacity. Community mechanisms need sustained support to remain effective.

The Peacebuilding Commission can help maintain political attention and mobilize partners. The Peacebuilding Fund and relevant AU instruments can support nationally led prevention and peacebuilding efforts.

We should strengthen the connection between identified risks, national responses and timely financing. This would help support reach communities before tensions escalate.

Funding should also strengthen the institutions and livelihoods that allow countries to sustain progress themselves.

Rwanda’s rebuilding journey has required difficult choices and sustained effort. It has depended on people taking part in justice, rebuilding their communities and shaping the country’s future.

The lesson we bring and wish you to take away today is: national ownership becomes meaningful through the institutions people build, the decisions they influence and the responsibilities they share.

AU–UN cooperation should help countries sustain that work. That is how reconstruction can strengthen prevention and build a lasting foundation for peace.

I thank you.