

**It is nearly 10 years since the Rwandan genocide, in which some 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed.**

The country is still reeling from the impact of Africa's worst genocide in modern times.

President Paul Kagame claimed a landslide victory in last year's elections, the country's first presidential poll since the 1994 genocide.

Rwanda has been beset by ethnic tension between the dominant Tutsi minority and the majority Hutus. Mr Kagame himself downplays any ethnic agenda in Rwanda, presenting himself as a Rwandan and not a Tutsi.

Having taken office in 2000, he ran in 2003 on a platform of national unity, boosting economic growth, strengthening governance and delivering justice.

President Paul Kagame answered your questions in a special recorded edition of Talking Point. A video will be available later this week. You can also watch the programme on BBC World TV, or hear it on BBC World Service Radio, at 1406GMT on Sunday, 8 February.

## **Transcript**

### **Lyse Doucet:**

Hello and welcome to this special edition of Talking Point. I'm Lyse Doucet in London. Our guest today is the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame. Mr Kagame has dominated politics of Rwanda for more than a decade, first as a military commander, when he entered his country in the wake of the genocide and now as President.

Last year he won an astonishing 95% of the vote in elections which were described as the new start for his country. But the last decade has been a traumatic time for Rwanda; more than 800,000 dead in the genocide and according to human rights groups, tens of thousands more at the hands of Rwandan government troops. When will there be justice for Rwanda? Well the man who may have some of those answers for us is the President himself. Welcome to London, Paul Kagame.

Ten years since the genocide and yet is that time enough to talk about a new start for your country ?

### **President Kagame :**

Given the magnitude of the problem, we are talking about, a genocide that took place in Rwanda in 1994, ten years is quite a short time. As you know, other genocides have taken place before; perhaps let's talk about the holocaust that took place 50 years ago. The effects of that are still felt in many parts of the world and felt by those who were directly affected. So 10 years in Rwanda is a very short time.

But a lot has happened in the 10 years; progress has been made in rebuilding the country; reconciliation has worked, we have backed democratisation and building of institutions - democratic institutions. The country today is stable and is at peace with their neighbours and at peace with itself. So I think it is a tremendous progress made in just 10 years, given the seriousness, the tragedy that took place in Rwanda.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Many people have e-mailed or called us about some of those specific issues that you just mentioned, so we'll go into detail on some of them.

But I'd like to ask you - you've just come back from the first ever international conference on genocide where they said never again and vowed to take steps to stop it from happening again. One of the things you mentioned there was trying to get rid of the labels Hutus and Tutsis - the two main ethnic groups in your country. Is that really possible given everything that's happened ?

**President Kagame:**

Well it's possible because what made it sound like that and later on resulted in the genocide we had in 1994 was politics. It was the ideology that people held when they were in politics.

**Lyse Doucet :**

But not ethnic rivalries ?

**President Kagame :**

Not really because ethnic..

**Lyse Doucet :**

That's how it's largely described as ethnic warfare between these two groups - between the Hutus and your own group, the minority Tutsis.

**President Kagame :**

If that was the problem then you would be having genocides taking place every year in every country because there are different tribes in different countries - ours actually cannot be described as a situation paralysed by tribes because we have only one tribe - we have one culture, we speak one language, we share everything in common.

But some of these problems were created by the leaders, followed by politics and drove the whole population into that. So it's very difficult to imagine that that can't be reversed, because if you follow correct political ideology in our situation and bring the people of Rwanda back together, to act together, because they share a lot in common and see that as a source of strength to rebuild themselves, I don't see why it can't work.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Let's take our first caller. We have on the line from Illinois in the United States, Delor Adam.

**Delor Adam:**

Mr President I have a question for you, I would like to know, what have you done personally and as President of the country, to heal the wounds? Have you set up any programmes? Have you spoken to the people? What have you done to help these wounds heal? And they need to be healed soon.

**President Kagame :**

I have personally and together with the government, done a lot. First of all we did the best we can to stop the genocide that was taking place in 1994 and thereafter we embarked on the process of reconciliation. We have a national commission dealing with the reconciliation process which has done a very good job and we have all supported it. Along with that we have also put in place a democratic process which has seen Rwanda through elections at grassroots levels, at local government level, at the parliamentary level, at the presidential level.

Now democracy has come back to Rwanda, there is stability in Rwanda, there is peace in Rwanda, there is that reconciliation going on. There is the rebuilding of lives in terms of overcoming the tragedy we had in 1994. I think a lot has been achieved. Looking at the stability of the country enjoys in the whole region and the amount of security enjoyed by the inhabitants of my country. I think I have done my best as a person, as a president to contribute to all that that has seen progress take place in my country.

**Lyse Doucet :**

Mr President we had e-mails from other people who asked you a more pointed question like Emmanuel in London who said: Shouldn't you face trial for crimes against humanity ?

Of course there has been mention of the criticism by international human rights groups, like Human Rights Watch and I quote - the Rwandan Patriotic Army, which you are a member of, has murdered thousands in 1994, committed war crimes and crimes against humanity. No members of the Rwandan armed forces have gone on trial for the international criminal tribunal for Rwanda. You've resisted that - why ?

**President Kagame :**

Well first of all I find that as originating from complete ignorance of what took place in Rwanda.

Lyse Doucet:

But the United Nations' commission of experts said - and I quote again - there was serious breaches of international law by the Rwandan Patriotic Army and the Front of which you were the commander.

**President Kagame :**

Shouldn't we be trying those people for allowing genocide to take place in Rwanda when they had full responsibility to prevent that, later on to stop it? If people stood by watching genocide take place why can't they be tried? Those of the UN who are saying that, they are ones who allowed the genocide to take place in Rwanda. The Rwandan Patriotic Front did not commit genocide.

**Lyse Doucet :**

You deny these charges then ?

**President Kagame :**

And indeed it's not denying it, it didn't happen.

**Lyse Doucet :**

But you yourself have said that some of your soldiers did commit crimes.  
President Kagame :  
But that is not genocide. Again that's the whole falsehood that is being traded out of ignorance.

**Lyse Doucet:**

The United Nations speaks of 30,000 dead. If it's not genocide but it is an abuse. Should there not be justice for those people ?  
President Kagame:

I think there is a just a mix up of issues. Let's, for simplicity and for wanting to be accurate and being able to find a way forward, look at things the way they are. Let's not mix the genocide that took place that was masterminded, that was neglected by the international community - in which case the international community should be held accountable for that as well. Let's not mix that with crimes committed by individuals and individuals are brought to justice. I think this is just a confusion and cover-up of responsibility of those in the international community, who allowed genocide to take place in my country.

**Lyse Doucet :**

Of course compared to the 800,000 dead of both moderate Hutus as well as Tutsis, the claim of 30,000 dead by your forces may seem small. But do you deny that those abuses took place ?

**President Kagame :**

They never took place. Where is the evidence? Who are those saying it ?

**Lyse Doucet :**

The United Nations Commission of Experts, the field team for the United Nations Human Rights Commission, Human Rights Watch - a well regarded international human rights organisation.

**President Kagame :**

They've just been given reports - they collect from NGOs, they collect from anybody, including those who are actually on the field that are responsible for the very genocide we are talking about. If you go to the Congo and meet the militias there and ask them what happened, they would accuse Rwanda for committing the genocide.

**Lyse Doucet :**

But there was a draft resolution by the UN Security Council which says that all sides should investigate the Rwandan Army, including Rwanda, which seems to be an acknowledgement that crimes were committed by yourself as well.

**President Kagame:**

No, no no. If they are saying it should be investigated, that means they want to put what is being said correctly and the only way to put it correctly is through investigation. I think it's a fair assertion when they say there should be an investigation. But which investigation are they talking about that has taken place and found what is being reported as being true and therefore who is responsible ?

**Lyse Doucet :**

So you say you would agree to an investigation then ?

**President Kagame :**

But that is not a subject of discussion yet and that's not a problem for us. I think what we are opposed to are wild allegations without any substantiation.

**Lyse Doucet :**

Are you saying that the United Nations, the world body, is wild ?

**President Kagame :**

That's what one can conclude from what you are saying.

**Lyse Doucet:**

I'll read you an e-mail from someone called Peace and lives in Canada who says: How would you like to be remembered in regard to the genocide of 1994? What do you remember of that time ?

**President Kagame :**

For me I led the forces that fought and stopped the genocide - the Rwandan Patriotic Front. If anybody wants to investigate me or try me - I have no problem with that, my conscience is very clear. On the contrary, I think those others who allowed the genocide to take place - their conscience is not clear, there's no doubt about it.

**Lyse Doucet :**

We had an e-mail from Willis Shalita, San Francisco, USA who asks: Are there wanted genocide perpetrators living in the United States that you know of and is there anything we can do?

**President Kagame :**

Not to the best of my knowledge. I don't have any specific names of those living in the United States. But if we come to know of anyone - just bring the names up - I would be happy to bring the names forward but I'm sure with our people who follow that on a daily basis - it was responsibility of the Ministry of Justice - perhaps they might have the names, I don't know. But if we get to know them we would be very happy to notify Willis. I know Willis and we could communicate with him.

**Lyse Doucet :**

You've criticised in your remarks already that you said the international community didn't do enough to prevent the genocide.

**President Kagame :**

They've never done enough. They are not going to do enough.

**Lyse Doucet :**

But do you believe they're still keeping the memory alive and learning the lessons of it ?

**President Kagame:**

Well I think there is a lot to be learned by the international community. I don't see them learning any lessons, given what has been happening in my country since the days the genocide was being planned, prepared and nothing was done to stop that and there was a presence of the international community on the ground - they were seeing all that happen. This is why I find it double standards when people stand there and start accusing those who prevented genocide as the ones being responsible for different crimes that have taken place in our region. I think it is just offensive and it doesn't make sense.

**Lyse Doucet:**

And their efforts in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda - I know it has been in power for eight years - half a billion dollars spent but only a small number have been convicted so far? I know you've been a critic of it. But are they starting to get it right?

**President Kagame:**

I think that's just another theory but at least to an extent it is something that engages - that commits the international community in the process of trying to bring to account those who are responsible, that's fine. And there has been some improvement since the changes were made in the running of the tribunal, we hope progress can continue to be made.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Let's take another caller, we've heard from Pakukutu Hapaurayi, who is calling from the Zambia. Lusaka, Zambia

**Pakukutu Hapaurayi:**

I am calling from Lusaka, Zambia. I have just a few questions for President Paul Kagame. The first one is to do with the democracy in his country - the future of democracy in his country. The President has been in charge for almost ten years now what has he done on the ethnic divide so that the demographic democracy goes away and leads to real democracy that doesn't look at Hutu or Tutsi? Lastly I would like to congratulate Rwanda for being at the Africa Cup of Nations in Tunisia.

**President Kagame:**

Well we have really ushered in national unity and reconciliation in our country and better than that we have organised a democratic process which has seen elections at different levels - at the grass root levels, at the local government level, we have had elections, we have had parliamentary elections, we've had presidential elections. I have participated in that, yes, indeed, in the last 10 years and the process has been quite a success. And as you realise we have more stability in the country than you can talk about in any part of the region.

**Lyse Doucet:**

We had a number of e-mails who would support you in that and wanted to congratulate you. Robert, Hamilton, Canada says: I'm very proud of what you have achieved in Rwanda.

Kayitankole in Windsor, Canada says: Rwanda has proved to the rest of the world how its leadership, united and hard working people can change to make things look positive. Rwanda's future is promising.

But we also received some critical e-mails. Mambu Wa Mambu, USA says: How were you elected with more than 90% of the votes, when your country is so badly divided ?

**President Kagame :**

Well we've done some work in bringing back peace to the country and we have reached out to everyone in Rwanda. We've gone to the villages, talked to them, worked with them to rebuild their lives. And as you notice during, for example, when we were voting for the constitution which had been drafted for nearly one and a half years, the turnout of people to come and vote in the referendum was very high, it was over 90%. And other following elections were - the people in Rwanda turned out in large numbers in all the elections we carried out - parliamentary elections, presidential elections.

You could see Rwandans were very enthusiastic, they want to come forward and make choices they felt they should make and that's how they made different choices, including voting in the referendum, voting yes to the constitution and electing their different representatives in the parliament and voting for the president with such a turnout and such a marginal victory. And that's the choice and democracy is about choice and I think the choice was made on the basis of the work that the Rwanda Patriotic Front and myself and others had made.

**Lyse Doucet:**

You reject the criticisms then of some of the people who observed the run up to elections who said that you had banned some parties from participating - that's factual, there were some parties banned and you prohibited the formation of other opposition groups? Again Human Rights Watch said that you eliminated the opposition.

**President Kagame:**

I have my way of looking at things and other people.

**Lyse Doucet :**

Why were those steps taken?

**President Kagame:**

Let me say that other people have - are entitled to their opinions as well.  
Lyse Doucet:

But they are not opinions they are factual in the sense that you did ban certain parties. Why was that necessary?

**President Kagame:**

Let me explain that the measures that have been taken are constitutional. When you're going to play in a game, if you're involved in politics, I'm not saying that politics is a game that is being played, but I'm trying to say that any process has rules by which it must be carried out, including elections, including a democratic process, it has to be carried out through a set of rules that must be respected. And these rules were put forward by the people, not by myself.

**Lyse Doucet:**

But you yourself made a speech in which you talked about - and I quote you from the speech - you threatened to wound the dissidents. Did you feel that kind of harsh approach was necessary at a delicate time for your country?

**President Kagame:**

Well first of all I did not speak in English.

**Lyse Doucet:**

But there would have been a translation. So you deny that you said that, that you threatened to wound..?

**President Kagame:**

No, no I don't deny it.

**Lyse Doucet:**

You did say it?

**President Kagame:**

I'm ready to say what - to repeat what I said. You see myself and maybe others we're not just people there who have no sense of direction or sense of responsibility. If you want to create or again open up the wounds of the past, to open for a new genocide, we won't be very kind to you and I have no regrets saying that I would certainly resist whoever will try it. So I'm not saying I didn't say it.

**Lyse Doucet:**

So you did it because you felt it was too dangerous - these were people trying to open the wounds that had been so brutally exposed in the genocide?

**President Kagame:**

Yes, yes and if you - anybody wanted to incite the people of Rwanda to carry out genocide again I have no apologies to make about standing up against that and fighting against it, whether it means the use of arms. So I don't apologise for saying that to anyone, I would repeat that tomorrow.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Let me ask you a question which was given by Bob Kirenga, Oslo, Norway: What is your message then after the elections for those who didn't vote for you and the opposition that lost in the polls? What would you say to them now in the light of what you've just told us?

**President Kagame:**

Well I give a very clear message when - at the inauguration day, when I became the president, president through elections, that my victory was not only a victory for those who voted me to become president, it was a victory for the whole country because I stand, I believe and have convictions about national unity, about the rights of every Rwandan in Rwanda.

So I'm convinced about that, I'm not doing it or I don't get involved with these efforts to just please outsiders or the so-called critics or anything, it is my duty, it is my right, it is my country. So I have a duty to my people, I have a responsibility, I have my convictions, I have my beliefs. So I don't do things because I get instructions from anybody.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Is it too soon then to have a healthy political opposition in Rwanda, too dangerous?

**President Kagame:**

I think it's there, the political opposition is there. But fortunately it is the political opposition that plays by the rules, the rules that have been put there by the Rwandans. If there is anybody who wants to play outside the rules then certainly the rules disqualify that person and that's what happened and I have again no apologies to make about it.

**Lyse Doucet:**

And it's not against the rules to wound someone if they're against you?  
President Kagame:

No, if anybody wanted to bring back genocide - again I repeat it - I have the right to wound that person because if I don't then it will wound all Rwandans.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Let's take another caller from Uganda.

**Wilfred Kusemererwa:**

As regards the problems of refugees not returning to Rwanda, Mr President, I would like you tell us - you promised to return all the refugees back to the country.

But right here some of them are now fleeing far away from Rwanda. What do you have to say about it ?

**President Kagame:**

Well I think that's the importance of statistics. I think statistics and facts are very important and you can't just dispute them. If you look at, in the last nine years we have been in power over 2 million Rwandans have returned to the country. And the people he's talking about, the gentleman's talking about, about 20,000 people who when others were returning from Tanzania or other neighbouring country we repatriated over 600,000 Rwandans from Tanzania. And a number of them crossed - a few thousands - crossed from Tanzania, into Uganda, they didn't want to come back to Rwanda.

One of the reasons is that Rwanda is a small country. If they come back they'll not have enough land on which to cultivate and live, so they decided to cross into Uganda where they can go and have big plots of land to cultivate.

The other reason was that some of them actually feared justice and crossed into Uganda instead of coming directly home from Tanzania. So these are the people the gentleman's talking about. So the statistics alone tell the story. I don't necessarily have to tell you the story. Two million people - over two million people.

**Lyse Doucet:**

He's obviously concerned though - but he himself seems to suggest that there is a concern among some Rwandans that it's not safe to return home?

I'll just read you another e-mail we received from Marcellin Mutuyimana, Ohio, USA who says: What is your view towards exiled Rwandans living around the world and do you have a message for them?

**President Kagame:**

Yes I have a message for them.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Especially if they are concerned as the other gentleman.

**President Kagame:**

Whenever I'm travelling either to Europe or to the United States or anywhere I always make it a point to call upon Rwandans. Many times I have met them, I have talked to them, even those who don't want to come back to Rwanda, have been there, they've raised questions, I've answered them and explained to them what is happening in Rwanda.

There it is a question of these people making a choice, sometimes it is not attractive to be in Rwanda when you can be in the United States or when you can live

in London. I think some people might find it more comfortable to live there than to live in Rwanda. I did not create Rwanda. I'm not responsible for some of the problems that make people make different choices and I've tried to do what is humanly possible.

**Lyse Doucet:**

But do you find that people are still worried because of what happened in 1994?

A large number of the e-mails were from people who wanted to know what was being done to address this ethnic divide.

Kassahun, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia says: How have you attempted to address the possible alienation of the Hutu majority in your country ?

**President Kagame:**

You see again it depends on how people look at things.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Is that something you regard as priority that must be done now?

**President Kagame:**

It is a priority in terms of when you talk about reconciliation, when we've been talking about democratisation, when we have been giving people their right to make choices of who will become their leaders I think it's about really bringing the country back together. And who are we doing it to - when we talk about 95% or 90% turnout in elections, I don't think we are talking about Tutsis, we're talking about Rwandans, including the so-called Hutu majority mentioned in the e-mail.

So when for us we're addressing these problems, we're addressing problems of Rwandans, we're not just addressing problems of Hutus and Tutsis, we're addressing problems of Rwandans, where we recognise the rights of every individual whether they're Hutu or whether they're not.

**Lyse Doucet:**

But of the specific programmes we saw in South Africa - there was a truth and reconciliation commission to heal wounds there. Is there something in Rwanda that is specifically addressing this?

**President Kagame:**

Yes, the national unity reconciliation commission which I have talked about a thousand times is about that. When we have talked about the local courts - participatory justice process - that is there. It's about that, it is about reconciling people. It's about hearing from them, their feelings, the truth about what happened,

what they think about it, where they think the country needs to go in the future. It's about that. Actually our process has been more successful than even the truth and reconciliation commission you are talking about.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Nate Ward, Columbus, USA asks: Do you think the deep-seated ethnic differences have potential to spill over into civil society and create conflicts in the business and commercial spheres ?

**President Kagame:**

Not at all, I think what we have been doing in Rwanda has been actually to involve everyone, every level of our society. We involve the civil society, we involve the business community, we involve the youth, the women. And all these are given their role and their right, even within our constitution; our new constitution is very clear on these issues. It recognises all of these elements in our society that must play a role in the rebuilding process of our country. And indeed they are playing a part and I haven't had anybody complain for some of the criticism or some of the complaints coming. These are not in line with what we see, those of us who live in the country.

**Lyse Doucet:**

But people are asking questions, so that must be their observations.  
President Kagame:

I'm trying to explain that what is on the ground is much more than what is simply being talked about.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Let's take another caller. We have David who called us from Scotland.  
David Johnson:

My name is David Johnson from Edinburgh in Scotland. I spent six weeks in Rwanda last year as part of a voluntary aid programme and was struck by how close-knit communities work together, the relaxed way of life and how content many people were despite having so little. When you look at countries like the UK, do you think we have lost these qualities as we have developed and do you think that there are things we can learn from countries like Rwanda?

**President Kagame:**

You see I think I'm very happy - this is a person who has actually been on the ground in Rwanda and that's what he saw and that's exactly what is happening. Well I think it's an opportunity for us to have such values and the people who still believe in one another and can help each other and work together, given opportunities like getting back together and working together. If education programmes go on well, if the health issues are addressed, if we manage to help our people to engage themselves in productive activities that empower them, the economy and improve

their lives. It's all very positive and that makes it much easier and more beneficial if it is built on such values that have just been talked about and we encourage such values to be upheld by members of our society.

But about the UK, I cannot make a judgement about the UK, I think they have different ways of living and they have different histories. So yes different from our own and perhaps different from what happens maybe in other parts of Africa. So there is a lot we can learn from them and maybe there's a lot they can learn from us.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Let's take a caller from Uganda.

**Patrick Kamara:**

My name is Patrick Kamara, I am calling from Kampala, Uganda. My question to President Kagame is we are wondering why we see the two heads of state, President Paul Kagame and his Ugandan counterpart, Yoweri Museveni, flying from Africa to London from where they're trying to make a peace deal or maybe talk like brothers, wasting national resources? Where are the African solutions for the African problem? Can they just sit in the Ugandan town Kavali or maybe on the other side of Rwanda and talk? What has gone wrong? President Paul Kagame, he's lived in Uganda for decades. President Museveni - they have been colleagues for decades. Why can't you solve your issues from here?

**President Kagame:**

Well I agree with many things that have been said by the caller. It would have been better - well first of all if there wasn't a problem at all between our two countries. Secondly, if we could, when they came up, if we could have resolved them ourselves without having to bring in a third party.

Thirdly, if the third party had been maybe some neighbour who shares a lot with us. But all that didn't happen and without going into the whole history of our problems, since we are resolving none of them and moving forward I don't want us to be taken back on this issue. As long as we're making progress I'm happy, it doesn't matter the venue anymore. Since our facilitator in the United Kingdom is doing a good job of making us meet and helping us to move forward and reach some good understanding and re-establish the area - good relations we've had, so be it, I have no problem with that. But I certainly agree with some of the things that have been said by the caller.

**Lyse Doucet:**

It was Britain who offered to host these talks in London to repair relations between you and Yoweri Museveni of Uganda. What went wrong? You after all had your armed forces based in Uganda; you were a great mate of Yoweri Museveni; you helped him in Uganda - why did you fall out? It was over the Democratic Republic of Congo wasn't it ?

**President Kagame:**

Well if you can spare me going through the explanation again, which I've done many times, and since we're making good progress - that is my country and Uganda - I think we should be more forward looking and not keep going back into the history but rather keep focusing on the present.

**Lyse Doucet:**

But if there was a problem in the past which is now threatening the future, it's important to identify what went wrong.

**President Kagame:**

Yes we have identified that in our discussions, this is something which we have been able to make progress. What I'm saying in the media maybe doesn't serve the process very well to keep talking about the past and like we are accusing each other again. Since we are already making a forward movement I think we'd better stick to that and continue to be forward looking.

**Lyse Doucet:**

But you've accused each other of arming rebel groups to fight against your governments.

**President Kagame:**

That's history now.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Has it stopped?

**President Kagame:**

We will talk about that maybe in the future.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Has it stopped? Has Yoweri Museveni stopped ?

**President Kagame:**

So far I say for sure there's no crisis, there isn't any problem we should be worrying about either in Uganda or Rwanda. We are on a good path and we are reaching good understanding, we're establishing good contacts and I want to remain focused on that.

**Lyse Doucet:**

But has he stopped, according to you, arming rebels who are fighting against your government ?

**President Kagame:**

So far there is no crisis.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Has he stopped arming rebels against your government ?

**President Kagame:**

There is no problem, we are moving forward.

**Lyse Doucet:**

What about you? You're accused of still arming Ugandan rebels.

**President Kagame:**

Well I don't accept the accusation because it is not true. What is very true is that we are resolving our problems and moving forward.

**Lyse Doucet:**

If it isn't you, why was he angry at you then? If the accusation isn't true, which comes from Uganda, why would he be unhappy with you?

**President Kagame:**

They are no longer unhappy with me and that is something of the past.

**Lyse Doucet:**

So then you can assure Patrick there won't be any more talks in London? In fact I've heard that talks will now move back to the region.

**President Kagame:**

They will move to the regions, so that partly addresses Patrick's concerns.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Let me read you an e-mail we've received from Goma in the Congo - an area which has seen its own share of strife. Kambale says: When will you pull the last soldiers out of eastern Congo? I live in eastern Congo; we still see them here in big numbers despite your claim that they left early last year.

**President Kagame:**

Those must be soldiers from another country not Rwanda.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Well he lives in Goma and he says he sees your soldiers there and in fact the United Nations still says they see your soldiers there.

**President Kagame:**

That's not true, the United Nations has not said that, that's not true. And they are there actually particularly to see whether we are still there and they have not said that.

**Lyse Doucet:**

But I have the report here who says the Rwandan network is considered to be the most serious threat. The key feature is the role of Rwanda as the architect and orchestrator of some of the former rebel groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

**President Kagame:**

That hasn't said we are still there at all.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Well it still says, that this network is part of Rwanda's strategy to bring under its control and influences large tracks of land in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

**President Kagame:**

That has not said we have soldiers in the Congo.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Well it still says the camps remain active.

**President Kagame:**

You are just making an interpretation in your own words - we have no soldiers there.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Rwandan Defence Forces have responsibility for engineering and intelligence training and exercises a command and control function within the training camps.

**President Kagame:**

Yes, but what does that mean ?

**Lyse Doucet:**

So who is doing it, if not soldiers? Do you deny this United Nations report ?

**President Kagame:**

That report - I don't know - which date is that?

**Lyse Doucet:**

This is from last year. In fact this was from a part of the report which wasn't published. It was the UN report last year.

**President Kagame:**

Why was it not published ?

**Lyse Doucet:**

Well, because it was seen to be too delicate. They didn't want to accuse you because they wanted Paul Kagame on their side.

**President Kagame:**

Since when did they become so kind to us? I'm really surprised.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Well the one which was published did talk about the plunder of eastern Congo.

**President Kagame:**

You know why it wasn't published?

**Lyse Doucet:**

Why?

**President Kagame:**

It had no facts, no evidence, nothing, that's why - otherwise they're not so kind to anybody, not to us at least.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Let's talk about the one which was published which talked about the plunder of the mineral resources of eastern Congo by Rwandan soldiers. Do you accept what the United Nations says - that Rwandan soldiers are still there?

**President Kagame:**

First of all, that's a different question from that that was asked - I think there are talking about the present - the person is asking about the present. If it is about the past, that is the past of course when we were there. But if we are talking about present, we are not there. So I have to answer the question first.

**Lyse Doucet:**

But Kambale in Goma asks to ask you about the soldiers which he still sees in the Congo.

**President Kagame:**

Yes I think it's in order to address that question to the UN observers who are there because that's why they're there. We have representative of the UN in Kigali. Whenever there is anything they want to raise with us they raise it with us, they have not raised anything to do with our presence in the Congo because that is not the case. So this person, I mean should be advised to raise the matter with the UN observers best in the Congo because that's why they are there.

**Lyse Doucet:**

But you reject the United Nations report which said that Rwandan soldiers were still remaining in the east of Congo and were now taking over ?

**President Kagame :**

I totally disagree and it is not true and I don't want to attribute it to the UN because they have not said it recently. They used to say it when we were there.  
Lyse Doucet:

This is a report of October 2002 and I quote - that Rwanda has replaced Congolese directors of para-statal with Rwandan businessmen. And I quote again - Rwandan army battalions specialise in mining activities, have stayed in place and have continued their activities under a commercial guise. Now that was a report that you would have been handed.

**President Kagame:**

You're talking about 2002. In 2002 we were in the Congo. You're asking too many questions in one, perhaps let me respond to each one of them otherwise you won't understand what the issue being raised is about.

First of all we used to be in the Congo. So by 2002 we were still in the Congo. So that's not a secret and therefore it's not an accusation they should be making today, because we are no longer there.

The second part is about exploitation and the exploitation story is a very long one and there are so many flaws which we have discussed with the UN. And actually what you said was left behind or left out of the report was on the basis that it had no basis for being in the report in the first place and that's why it was left out. Otherwise

the UN has not been crying to us and I don't think they would intend to do that. So meaning therefore there is a lot of falsehood in the report which they are also uncomfortable with.

I would say it again, because we've been discussing things with the UN is not the first thing. First of all there are definitions that are not very clear to us, perhaps there are things people are not aware of. But Rwanda and Congo, Eastern Congo, or Uganda and Congo or Rwanda and Burundi or Rwanda and Tanzania, Rwanda and Uganda. Along the borders we have people bringing business for centuries. And this became part of the accusation and we actually put a question straight to the UN, we said - you want us to stop the Congolese crossing in Rwanda and Rwandans crossing into Congo? And we demonstrated to them that most of these people actually live by crossing to get what they don't have from the other side of the border. And this was being seen as if - blown into exploitation of the other country.

We were asking them why don't you say also that Congo is exploiting Rwanda because thousands of people cross from Congo to Rwanda to look for food. And we were saying okay if you're talking about individuals who think we are involved in wrong doing, members of armed forces in the Congo, we try to investigate ourselves. We did not get anybody. You have to ask the people on the ground. Let them show you which mining is to belong to the Rwandans who are no longer there, it is easy, or which forest Rwandans use to cut timber from for export. If you get that then you've got evidence. They haven't found a thing now. And with individuals, we've said give us evidence about the divisions they're talking about.

Lyse Doucet:

So we're clear - you're saying that any of the Rwandans who are still in the eastern Congo are part of natural movement of migration which have long existed?

So you are saying just so Kambale in the Congo knows, there are no Rwandan troops, none of your forces ?

**President Kagame:**

As of now ?

**Lyse Doucet:**

As of now.

**President Kagame:**

Zero - not a single one.

**Lyse Doucet:**

And that's what you've told the United Nations ?

**President Kagame:**

They know it. They are there - they're in Goma - they are in different parts of Eastern Congo.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Mr Dost, in Germany says: Following Rwanda's controversial involvement in the Congo do you have a real heart for the Great Lakes security? Is that something Rwanda regards as a priority now ?

**President Kagame:**

Well the security of Rwanda and security of the region, very paramount and we take them as a priority. But why should Rwanda's presence in the Congo, when it was there, be controversial? You see again it goes back to the whole background of the problem.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Well almost all the regional powers were involved in the Congo.  
President Kagame:

Yes but not all countries had genocide taking place in their countries. For us it happened and those who committed genocide crossed into Congo and they are still there.

**Lyse Doucet:**

So you're saying that perpetrators of the genocide are still in the Congo ?

**President Kagame:**

Yes still in the Congo - absolutely.

**Lyse Doucet:**

And you're trying to get them back?

**President Kagame:**

We have been trying to get many of them back. Recently we brought back some of their commanders - they crossed back to Rwanda and we have them with us.

**Lyse Doucet:**

And do you think they still pose a threat to your country ?

**President Kagame:**

Well the hardliners stayed behind and want to continue threatening our country, that's why most of them didn't follow these commanders - they shouldn't come back because they are held back by the hardliners.

**Lyse Doucet:**

So is the United Nations listening to you? You haven't had a good relationship with the United Nations.

**President Kagame:**

I don't know whether the United Nations listens to us.

**Lyse Doucet:**

You don't think much of the United Nations - you've rejected all their reports.

**President Kagame:**

That is for sure and it is out of a very bad experience with them. I have very bad experience with them, that's what I know about it.

**Lyse Doucet:**

You tried to get rid of their prosecutor for your tribunal. Carla Del Ponte.

**President Kagame:**

No, they get rid of themselves. We tried to help them.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Let's take another caller from South Africa.

**Matthew Parks:**

My name is Matthew Parks, I'm calling from Cape Town, South Africa. My question to President Kagame is, does he intend for join the Southern African development community and how does he see South Africa's and Rwanda's relations deepening and expanding ?

**President Kagame :**

Well we have actually tried our best to be members of different organisations on our continent, the economic organisations, namely these are the ones that are there - the economic organisations. We think if we become members of these organisations we can be part of the bigger markets, we can be part of the regional communities of Africa, members of which keep helping each other in different ways to solve political problems and so on so forth. It's our policy to do that and we will continue to do that.

We have also applied to be members of the East African economic community and there is likelihood that that is going to be the case very soon, given the logic of it which is also acceptable to the members of the South African economic community present - Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda - because geographically here and for other reasons we are very much members of the South African community, that needs to be formalised. So we keep reaching out to such organisations and wanting to be members of that to make our own contributions so that we can also receive from them the benefits of such a membership.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Is it almost as hard to heal the wounds of the region, given the history of meddling, as it is to heal the wounds in your country ?

**President Kagame:**

Well we've done a good job in our country to heal the wounds and that has been largely dependent on the good response of the people of my country - the Rwandan people. We hope there's a lot we can share with our neighbours and then there is a lot we can learn from our neighbours.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Do you trust your neighbours ?

**President Kagame:**

Well we have to trust them until they prove otherwise.

**Lyse Doucet:**

We received a large number of e-mails from young people around the world, from different African countries, who wanted some advice from you. F Yusuf, Oregon, USA: I am a Somali. What advice and guidance would you give our leaders who have been fighting for the last 13 years ?

**President Kagame:**

Well their leaders should see that their country's in ruins and it is their responsibility to bring it back together and to feel responsible to these people, including Yusuf, the one who is raising this issue. I think certainly these leaders must transcend their differences and be very sympathetic to their own people and feel responsible to them and reach out to each other and try and rebuild their communities.

**Lyse Doucet:**

There isn't a sign of it though is there ?

**President Kagame:**

Well there are some signs - they are talking, right now they're in Kenya trying to talk peace, trying to see how they can resolve their differences. I think that's important and we should all encourage them to continue.

**Lyse Doucet:**

Let me end with a question from Eric Noue, Dallas, USA: What kind of legacy do you see yourself leaving for the youth of today to serve as an example to other countries in Africa where the same tragedies that Rwanda has gone through could still happen again?

**President Kagame:**

Well I would say to Eric that it's important for people to first know what they live for. I think we all live for positive things, we want to build our lives and be able to live healthy lives and be able to work together in different parts of the world to build our countries and to be able to move forward and evolve. And the youth can start that process from the early stage when they still have a lot of energies and remain focused on that up till the time they reach higher responsibilities to themselves and to their countries.

I think it's a question of choice - every individual has to make a choice what type of life one wants to live and how that translates into the good of the communities. And for me the legacy in Rwanda is about making Rwandans believe in themselves, first of all - that they deserve better than they have had in recent history; that they themselves can be the ones to change their lives to a more positive note and they have to participate in it. They have to have conviction that they can be able to do it and they have to move forward and do it, even if other people from outside help, they can only help building on their own efforts, not the other way round. And I think fortunately today I see that happening in Rwanda. For me I'm very happy, I'm very convinced we can make it and for the time I will continue to serve my country, this is what I want to see. After me somebody else should be able to come and continue that and that should be the choice of the Rwandans.

**Lyse Doucet:**

So ten years on from the tragic events, you Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda, you feel you've healed your own wounds and moved beyond the hatred that dominated that time ?

**President Kagame:**

Well I have helped to - a large measure - to help the Rwandans to heal these wounds and I think it has happened. I'm very happy and comfortable with my role in that and it's my duty to the Rwandans and this is my personal conviction.

**Lyse Doucet :**

Your conscience is clear, despite the criticisms ?  
President Kagame:

It is clear - those who criticise me have their own consciences which are not clear themselves. Mine is absolutely clear, I have no problem.

**Lyse Doucet:**

President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, thank you very much for being our special guest on Talking Point.