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His Excellency Olusegun Obasanjo
President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
and Chairman of the African Union

OPEN LETTER

Bonn, 29 January 2005

Excellency,

The Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) wish to congratulate your government and yourself for your outstanding services and tireless efforts in trying to broker peace between conflicting parties and restore peace and security throughout the African continent.

In recent years, Nigeria has been at the forefront of all peace keeping missions in Africa, particularly in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and currently in Darfour (Sudan). Nigeria has always put forward the internationally accepted principle that *true and lasting peace can only be achieved through a negotiated settlement and not by way of violence*.

Dialogue has allowed the end of hostilities that had been going on for decades between the government of Sudan and the rebellion of the SPLA in the southern part of that country. In the African Great Lakes sub-region, mediators in the conflicts in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo have all privileged dialogue as the only way of ending violence that has brought misery, claimed millions of innocent lives and stopped the hope of getting any development which was the aim of those who fought for the African independence.

Unfortunately, the recent meeting of the Committee on Peace and Security (CPS) of the African Union held in Libreville to address the ongoing violence in Côte d'Ivoire, Darfour and DRC, when it came to finding a lasting solution for the invasion of the DRC by Rwandan troops, instead of addressing the root causes of the presence of the Rwandan refugees and FDLR in the DRC, the CPS decided that a forced disarmament of the FDLR was the only way of easing the tensions between Rwanda and the DRC.

Excellency,

The FDLR wish to draw your attention on this particular point. The Rwandan refugees and the FDLR have, on several occasions, made it clear that they do not wish to remain refugees. They have always expressed their wish to return to their homeland and help to build a democratic and republican society, free of ethnicism and other kinds of bigotry. The FDLR wish to reiterate this commitment to your Excellency. **"The FDLR are ready to go back home but wish to discuss with the Rwandan government the terms of their return from exile and their integration in the Rwandan society with the assistance of the African Union and the International Community at large."**

Therefore, there is no need for violence to achieve this goal. Moreover, the material and financial resources that the African Union intends to use in disarming the FDLR should rather be channelled to the organization of dialogue between the Rwandan government and its opposition.

Instead of responding favourably to the FDLR offer for dialogue, the Rwandan government has decided that all those who are opposed to its politics should be called “former FAR and Interahamwe” and accused of genocide. The Kigali regime has always used that amalgam as an extreme argument to disqualify its opponents for good in order to avoid dialogue, whereas in the conflict of the DRC, Rwanda has been advocating for negotiations between the government and the different rebellions.

The FDLR have always said, and they wish to reiterate it to your Excellency, that they have nothing to do with those who took part in the Rwandan genocide. The FDLR are ready to cooperate with the African Union and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda so that whoever bears responsibility in the Rwandan tragedy, regardless of his/her political background, be brought to book before an independent justice and judged.

Excellency,

Why what was found to be unquestionable for conflict resolution in other countries (DRC, SUDAN and BURUNDI) becomes irrelevant when it comes to Rwanda? The fears of the FDLR for the return in Rwanda in current circumstances, without negotiations with the Kigali regime, are shared by independent sources which acknowledged that *in Rwanda of President Paul Kagame, there is neither democracy nor reconciliation but dictatorship, exclusion, ethnic discrimination and massive violations of human rights both in Rwanda and in foreign regions under Rwandan occupation*. Moreover they so rightly recognize that the invasion of the DRC by Rwandan troops derives from logic of mineral resources plunder and a deliberate policy of derailing the peace process and occupying the provinces of Kivu and Ituri.

If the African Union genuinely wishes to address the presence of the Rwandan refugees and the FDLR in the DRC, and the FDLR do hope that it is the case, it should therefore privilege the organization of a dialogue between the Rwandan government and its opposition in order to discuss the terms for their return home. The FDLR remain ready for this crucial meeting aimed at finding ways and means to bring lasting and viable peace and security in Rwanda, DRC and the African Great Lakes sub-region as a whole.

Should Kagame and his regime persist in refusing such a dialogue, the African Union and the International Community should acknowledge that Rwanda is the only source of insecurity in the region, take their responsibilities and exert diplomatic, economic and military pressure on Rwanda until it accepts dialogue as the only way to finding a lasting peace in the conflicts which are saddening the African Great Lakes sub-region.

The FDLR reiterate their commitment to achieve that goal.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Ignace Murwanashyaka
Chairman of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda

