

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE MARKING THE CLOSING EVENT
OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL FOR RWANDA
1 December 2015**

*Delivered by the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, UN Legal Counsel,
Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares*

Today we mark a momentous occasion in the history of the United Nations and the pursuit of international justice.

When the Security Council established the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the global community reaffirmed its commitment to addressing the impunity that has caused so much pain and sorrow.

In the 21 years since, the ICTR has helped transform international criminal justice from a lofty ideal to a more certain reality. Along with other courts, it has ushered in an age of accountability. Now, more than ever, those who commit crimes that shock the conscience of humanity can no longer consider themselves beyond the reach of the law.

As we mark the closing of the ICTR, we also reflect on the enormous loss and suffering of the victims of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda, during which Hutus and others were also killed. Some of the survivors, their families and friends recounted in courtrooms and to investigators the horrors of those dark days. Their deeply tragic and moving testimony was an indispensable part of the judicial process. I salute the courage of the witnesses and informants who spoke out to help ensure justice.

I also pay tribute to all the judges, prosecutors, staff and defence counsel. Through their work, they upheld the principles of individual responsibility and accountability. They embodied the determination of the peoples of the United Nations – as expressed in the preamble to the Charter – to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of the human person.

The ICTR's achievements would not have been possible without the sustained cooperation of Member States. I commend in particular the ICTR's host – Tanzania -- Rwanda, and all who supported its work at every stage – from arresting suspects to enforcing sentences. The success of the ICTR is the sum of our collective efforts.

Arusha's reputation as "The Hague of Africa" has blossomed because of the ICTR. Although the ICTR is closing, and its residual functions are being passed on to the Mechanism, it will remain an integral part of the international justice landscape. Those who prosecute and hear cases involving serious international crimes – either in domestic or international courts – will find wisdom and guidance in the work of the ICTR. Your efforts also serve as an inspiration for all those working to ensure accountability for the atrocities that characterize today's multiple armed conflicts.

The ICTR leaves behind a powerful legacy of which we can justly be proud. Thank you for advancing our global journey for justice.