

Home-grown methods of mediation work best, Rwanda tells General Assembly



President Paul Kagame of Rwanda

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Conflict mediation efforts will be far more successful if they are home-grown and harness the capacities of young people and regional groups or institutions, Rwandan President Paul Kagame [told](#) the opening of the General Assembly's annual general debate today.

Speaking at United Nations Headquarters in New York, Mr. Kagame warned that traditional methods of diplomacy can frequently take a toll on the people they are supposed to help.

“Too often, while resolutions are being debated and refined, people are dying,” he said. “And sometimes when those resolutions are eventually adopted, enforcement is slow, or they only halt the conflict for a short time but with no sustainable solutions.”

The theme of this year’s general debate is the role of mediation in resolving conflicts and the Rwandan leader stressed in his remarks that national ownership of the process remains vital.

“Mediation efforts must be based on an over-riding desire to bring conflicting parties to resolve their differences. But this should not be confused with supporting one side in the conflict, or imposing a solution in the interests of the mediators.”

He said the most effective way to prevent conflict from even arising was to empower citizens, particularly young people, so that they feel they have an important stake in the management and stability of their community or country.

“This generation carries less historical and political baggage, and is more inclined to getting the most out of this global village we all find ourselves sharing.

“With social and communication tools, they are key innovators and thought leaders not only of tomorrow but right now. We have an important responsibility to empower them.”

Mr. Kagame said mediation processes must be based on “specific cultural and political contexts. In Rwanda, for instance, we have seen this produce long-lasting solutions and tangible results on the ground because they are home-grown.

“It is also important to involve regional and sub-regional players, who have ample knowledge of the often complex regional dynamics of the conflicts in the mediation efforts. These organizations should be supported expeditiously, before disputes escalate into intractable conflicts.”

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