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Learning from Rwandan genocide only way to shape a better future – Ban



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. UN Photo/Mark Garten

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[Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon today honoured the victims of the Rwandan genocide and stressed that the only way to prevent such atrocities from occurring again is to learn from history.

“Rwanda has learned from the appalling tragedy of 1994. So has the world,” Mr. Ban said in a video [message](#) to commemorate the 18th anniversary of the genocide in the African nation, which is observed every year on 7 April. “Rwanda is making progress towards building a more peaceful and just society. The international community is striving to ensure that similar tragedies never happen again.”

At least 800,000 ethnic Tutsis and politically moderate Hutus were killed in 1994 during three months of bloodletting that followed the death of the then-president Juvenal Habyarimana.

In his message, Mr. Ban highlighted efforts by the international community to strengthen conflict prevention and mediation and to uphold the responsibility to protect.

“The United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda delivered the first ever verdicts in relation to genocide by an international court, and continues to pursue justice and accountability. The International Criminal Court has become an effective deterrent for would-be perpetrators of grave crimes,” Mr. Ban said. “And to those who persist in suppressing their fellow citizens who cry out for dignity and freedom, we send a clear message: justice will be done.”

The UN chief emphasized that genocide is a collective responsibility and called on countries to continue to work together to ensure a future free of genocide.

The theme of the 2012 commemoration on the genocide is “learning from history to shape a bright future.” A special ceremony will be held at UN Headquarters on Wednesday night; it will include a musical performance, a reading of excerpts from letters from orphans, widows and imprisoned genocidaires, as well as a candle lighting and remarks by various senior UN officials.

In addition, a screening of the documentary ‘Sweet Dreams,’ which depicts the journey of a group of Rwandan women who created the country’s first all-female drumming troupe and first-ever local ice cream shop, will be screened on Thursday at the Economic and Social Council’s chamber.

Commemorative events led by UN Information Centres will also be held across the world in Bangladesh, Belgium, Burundi, Colombia, Congo, India, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Mexico, Namibia, South Africa, Switzerland, Tanzania, Uganda, Ukraine and Zambia.

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