

Kagame says ‘not scared about critics without guns’

Written by Fred Mwasa
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Kigali: For the bitter critics outside the country, President-elect Paul Kagame is not bothered unless they start fighting him with guns. In a fiery 27-minute speech which he delivered first in English, then summarized in Kinyarwanda, the President accused the foreign governments of supporting his vocal opponents whom he described as “adventurers”.



“Habitual critics of Rwanda may say what they want, but they will never dictate the direction we take as a nation, nor will they make a dent on our quest for self determination,” said Kagame (Photo: Leon Nzabandora)

“What we reject are those lessons we constantly receive, [and] the daily lies leveled against us...we defeated those with arms, we cannot be defeated by those with nothing but just hands,” said Kagame, as the stadium erupted in wild cheering.

He said in the “months and weeks preceding our elections there [was] an onslaught of bad press reports” from western press and right organizations. These news reports, the President said, “deliberately misrepresented the situation in Rwanda.”

“[They] sought to give the impression that there was something terribly wrong going on in our country...so to speak, as if the country was really falling apart. This made some to expect an eruption of violence in line with the prejudice in which African affairs are viewed,” said the president-elect.

He said Rwandans cannot listen to those he called “habitual critics of Rwanda” as the Rwandan

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people have "redefined themselves and are determined to forge ahead".

"They made their point defiantly by campaigning emphatically and enthusiastically, and voting in big [number]," said Kagame amid applause.

No contradiction in Rwanda

The President then turned his fire on the criticism which has mainly come from donors and rights groups, whom he said have repeatedly said there is a "contradiction" in Rwanda because there is development but no democracy.

"In fact, we hold the view that you cannot have sustainable development without corresponding growth in democratic governance," he said.

For the President, "political rights without the matching reduction of poverty and improved quality of life, would be meaningless."

According to the new President, who now starts a seven-year term, the biggest problem Africa faces is "not the lack of democracy but poverty and the dependence which comes with under development".

For Kagame, when the west sees that the notion of democracy does not fit their understanding, "they shift the goal posts" – claiming the government is becoming repressive.

Nobody will dictate direction for Rwanda

Moving into the achievements of his previous government including reconciliation, Kagame said all would "not have been possible without a political system where power is shared to united rather than divide".

"Given this background, it is difficult to comprehend those who want to give us lessons of inclusion, tolerance and human rights," said Kagame amid more applause, but mainly from the elite who understood the English.

"Habitual critics of Rwanda may say what they want, but they will never dictate the direction we take as a nation, nor will they make a dent on our quest for self determination," he added.

In what seemed like a response from him personally to the leaked UN report accusing Rwandan forces of massacring Hutus over a 10 year period in DR Congo, President Kagame was stern in just a sentence.

"And we therefore categorically reject all their accusations," he said, and some point said the foreign critics will not force opposition groups he called "adventurers" on the country. The President did not elaborate on who the adventurers are.

In Kinyarwanda

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For Rwandans, he said that he takes the “solemn pledge” to build a country where everybody “exercises their responsibility and have equal opportunities.”

After completing his 20-minute address, he asked the massive crowd whether they had understood – to which some could be heard responding “NO!” – marked with loud chanting and applause. The President then spent the next seven minutes summarizing the speech in Kinyarwanda.

Referring to western critics and donors, he told the crowd amid chanting that there are those who have given themselves the responsibility to monitor what others do.

“They condemn the good things we do and instead recommend for us the bad ones they do,” said Kagame amid more prolonged applause, before adding that the voters showed during the elections that they understand the origin, current situation and the future.

“[The elections] made clear to them that we reject disrespect,” added the President, also saying that Rwandan “lost value because of [outsiders], and we will never go back”.

In a hint at African solidarity, President Kagame offered to cooperate with other countries to collaborate in tackling the problems on the continent.

Kagame won with 93.08% of the vote the August 09 presidential election which was Rwanda’s second democratic polls since 1994 Genocide. About 16 African presidents and senior government officials graced the inauguration.

There was massive chanting as the inaugural president arrived at 10:22am local time, followed by the national anthem as he headed to take oath from the Chief Justice.

Dressed elegantly in navy blue suite, Kagame took oath to protect the Rwandan Constitution and the sovereignty of the country from all sorts of aggression either internal or external.