



**Rwandan parliamentary delegation led by The Honourable Alfred Mukezamfura, Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies. Also The Honourable Connie Bwiza Sekamana and The Honourable Balinda Rwigamba**

**6<sup>th</sup> December 2004**

**Summary Transcript**

Mr Mukezamfura thanked Chatham House for receiving the delegation, part of a larger delegation of ten Parliamentarians who were visiting the UK as guests of the UK division of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

For the last ten years the people of Rwanda have been re-building institutions that were destroyed in the Genocide. After a transition period of nine years a new Constitution, Presidency and Parliament was established in 2004. Mr Mukezamfura said that he would not dwell on the achievements of these past 10 years but concentrate on two factors: reconciliation and justice.

Most people understand that the genocide destroyed the basis of society in Rwanda, but people often overlook the fact that there were other pre-existing problems for example those relating to the treatment of the Twa minority as well as regional and religious problems. So currently the priority is to build a Rwandan national identity and rid ourselves of these ethnic and religious problems.

One of the major hurdles to this since the genocide has been the large numbers of people awaiting trial, some 120,000. With a traditional western justice system it would take too long to process everyone and in the meantime these alleged criminals are either living in their communities or are being held in remand centres that are overcrowded. So Mr Mukezamfura said that Rwandans decided to introduce a faster method of processing cases and that is why they launched Gacaca which means grass and comes from the tradition that if there is a problem in a village then the people sat down on the grass to discuss it.

Alongside this process we also launched a poverty reduction programme, which is important as poverty gives rise to conflict. The programme is called 20/20 vision because it seeks to map what we will have to do over the next 20 years to reduce poverty and tension in areas such as finance, land, energy etc and what outside help we will need to build up our education and infrastructure.

At the same time we bear in mind that security is the most important thing and nothing else can take priority. Our region is a very tumultuous one and the various conflicts throughout it threaten us. Mr Mukezamfura

said that Rwandans asked for people to help them, particularly against the Interahamwe who still threaten Rwanda. Mr Mukezamfura said that the Government are always appealing to the AU, UN, UK and others to protect the country from those who would plunge it back to Genocide.