

Rwanda's International Day of Peace celebrated in Parliament

27th September 2019



Innocent with some of the leaders



Participants of Rwanda International day of peace

The International Day of Peace in Rwanda was celebrated in Parliament. It was organized by the NURC, the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, with participants including the Cabinet Minister of the office of the President, Senators and MPs, the police and army, the National Commission of Demobilization and Re-integration, religious leaders, civil society organizations, and youth representatives from different districts of Rwanda.

Since 2011, NURC has worked in collaboration with government institutions and Partners to celebrate the International Day of Peace and further their broader efforts to build a culture of peace and reconciliation among Rwandans.

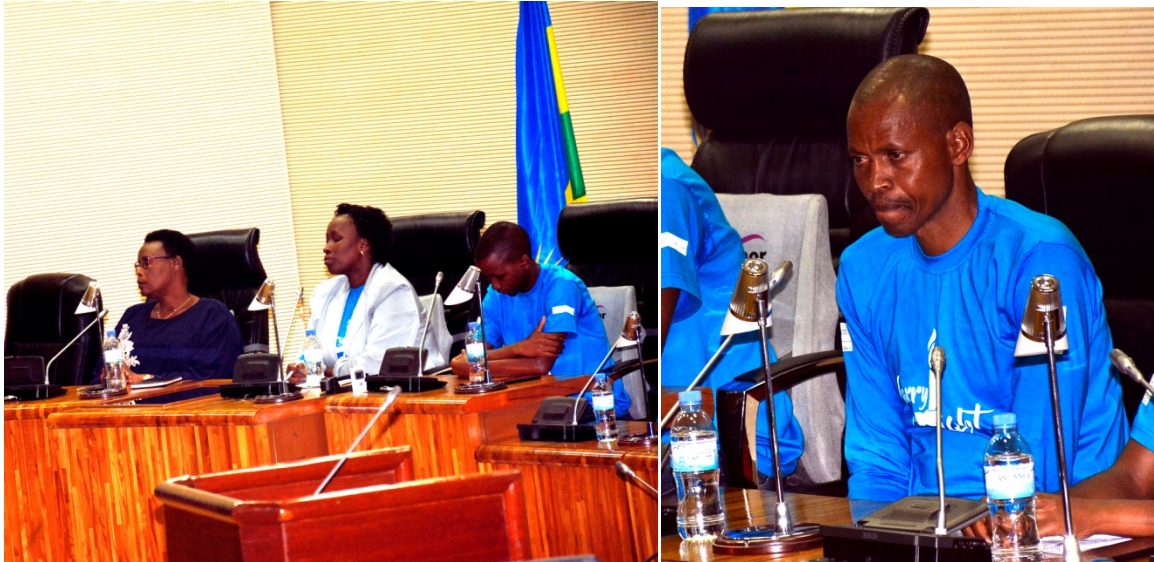
GER is an active partner of NURC. GER, in partnership with CFOR, conducts activities to support the national process of reconciliation. These activities take place in three districts: Kicukiro, Gasabo and Bugesera. The activities consist of large Forum events, now with more than 180 participants, including survivors and perpetrators of the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi. A wide range of participants include elders and youth. During these Forum gatherings, the participants engage in deeply emotional, transformative interactions. Training in facilitation is also given to a selected group of 50 participants who then bring their learning into community projects.

The NURC and other government authorities participate in the activities of GER and CFOR. They have been extremely appreciative of the way that our interventions are contributing to healing historical wounds and facilitating the possibility of reconciliation among survivors and perpetrators. As a result of our close partnership, the NURC invited us to participate in this event in Parliament. They proposed that we attend with some participants of our Forum and training programs, so that they could share their experiences, the progress that they have made in the process of reconciliation, and how participating in the Forum activities of GER and CFOR helped them to heal and reconcile.

We invited Carine, who is a Genocide survivor, and Patrick, who was a perpetrator of the Genocide, to the event. They shared in Parliament the story of how they met each other in a Forum of GER and CFOR.

Carine shared her painful experiences. "I was 26 years old when the 1994 genocide against Tutsi happened. I was mature enough to know what was happening. I was two months pregnant which made me have to sleep often everywhere we were hiding. After more than 23 years, I met Patrick at a

Forum of GER and CFOR in such a surprising way. I heard Patrick saying that he had participated in the Genocide and, in that moment, I remembered that I saw him killing people in the place where we were. I reminded him of some of the details of what he did there. He acknowledged that what I said was true and asked for forgiveness. Because we both continued to participate in the Forum and training activities of GER and CFOR, we have continued to develop our relationship. We stay in contact, communicate and support each other in helping others in our community. I recommend scaling up the interventions in other areas of the country.”



Carine and Patrick on the high table of Parliament sharing their experiences

Patrick reflected on how he was a perpetrator of the Genocide, and how he regrets what he did. “I regret what I have done during the Genocide; I had not known that Carine was a survivor of the group of people I was killing. When we met in the GER and CFOR Forum, it was my great opportunity to ask for forgiveness. I have continued to participate in these interventions of conflict transformation and reconciliation, which have helped me to interact with others and have made me more open and capable to say what I did even though it is so terrible and shameful.” Patrick appreciated the current leadership of Rwanda. He urged youth to have critical thinking to avoid Genocide ideology and divisionism. He also recommended that there should be more training for perpetrators, and for their children, to help them overcome the shame resulting from the participation of their parents in the Genocide.

After the event I talked with Carine and Patrick to check on how they were doing and how they felt after giving their testimonies and sharing their experience in Parliament. With lots of excitement, Carine said, “I am surprised. It is my first time sitting in Parliament. I felt like a leader as I was sitting at that high table of Parliament, sharing my experiences from the Genocide and steps towards reconciliation.”

Patrick said, “I participated in a terrible history. It is my pleasure to be able to sit in Parliament, take accountability in order to build the country, and make a contribution to the process of reconciliation.”



I appreciated the opportunity to meet with the high authorities in Rwanda and to be able to inform them about the contribution of GER and CFOR to the process of reconciliation. Sharing our experiences with decision and policy makers has provided increased exposure to the importance and benefits of our work.

Authorities were touched by the way Carine and Patrick shared their experiences and have since called me to keep in contact and to appreciate and encourage our work. The Speaker of the Parliament, who was the guest of honor, appreciated the work of Partners who are contributing to the process of reconciliation, and who are especially making vital efforts to support the youth, including those from families of survivors, perpetrators of the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi, and from marginalized groups.

When I was sitting in Parliament, I remembered the journey of organizing the Forum and Training activities of GER and CFOR and all the challenges along the way. Now I am very happy with the outcomes being shared among all Rwandans. This gives hope that we will help all Rwandans and scale the interventions in the region, specifically to the DRC where communities are facing violence and conflicts. I wish to organize forums with leaders, former leaders, and representatives of communities to find solutions of conflicts in that area because I am very concerned and touched by the painful experiences that communities are having.

I thank Arlene Audergon, PhD and Jean-Claude Audergon, MSc, and the whole CFOR team for your contribution and partnering with GER, I hope to achieve great things together.

Thank you!

Report prepared by Innocent Musore, GER (and edited by CFOR team)

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