

**OPENING REMARKS BY THE HON. CHIEF JUSTICE FOR THE 9TH
RETREAT OF JUSTICE, RECONCILIATION, LAW & ORDER SECTOR**

NYAGATARE, May 29th, 2023

Hon. Minister of Justice/Attorney General; Chair of JRLos

Hon. Deputy CJ

Hon. Ministers and members of JRLos

Excellence Ambassador EU and member of Diplomatic Corps

One UN Resident Coordinator; UNDP representative and co-chair

Dear Stakeholders and Partners;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

I am honored to have this opportunity to address such a distinguished audience and I thank you for attending this 9th Peer Review and Universal Periodic Review/ Retreat of Justice, Reconciliation, Law & Order Sector (JRLos). I would also like to express my gratitude to the Ministry of Justice and its stakeholders for working together in the preparation of this retreat. As one eminent personality (James Cash Penney)said, ***“Growth is never by mere chance; it is the result of forces working together”***, thus I am confident that this synergy amongst the justice sector and its partners will enable us to achieve

our targeted goals of dispensing quality and timely justice for the people of Rwanda.

The performance of one of us impacts the performance of all of us. This retreat is of a great importance since it brings together leaders from different institutions in the justice sector in Rwanda, and is a platform to discuss on what we have achieved so far as far as our duties and responsibilities are concerned, challenges we face, and it is a good opportunity for us together to take measures for the speeding up and improvement of justice service delivery, while respecting the independence of each organ and institution involved.

As justice institutions, the question of how to improve the performance of the justice system and the question of increasing the system effectiveness, transparency and accountability should remain our concern.

I wish also to remind us that our institutions are the foundation of the social contract between our country and its citizens, since justice institutions address breach of law, provide redress for violations of disputes and facilitate peaceful resolution of disputes. All these resonate well with our efforts to uphold the rule of law as we carry out our respective duties. We know well that when justice institutions operate effectively, accountability grows, and citizens and businesses can invest with confidence that their property will be protected. The task seems overwhelming, but our unwavering commitment and the support from our partners and stakeholders have enabled us to achieve some goods results.

Distinguished participants,

In the last two reports by the World Justice Project (WJP) for 2021 and 2022, Rwanda was ranked 42nd place in the World and 1st place in Africa in the Rule of Law.

Similarly, the Survey carried out in 2017 and 2018 by The World Economic Forum (WEF) conducted on 137 countries, on matters relating to judicial systems of each country, Rwanda was ranked the first in Africa and the 23rd in the World, and all this is a result of collaborations amongst the justice sector organs with the Government's support.

Notwithstanding this ranking, we must remain consistent and focused, and this is only achievable if we continue to work together towards building a culture of the law in our country. I would want to reiterate that there is still a lot to improve especially on *modus operandi* given the past experiences we have got, and I am glad that during this retreat we will be discussing on various issues that need our urgent attention.

As you all know, the theme for this retreat is ***Enhancing the Citizen's role in the Justice Service delivery to achieve our targets***. Enhancing citizen's role plays a crucial part in Justice delivery, since justice is rendered in the name of the people and all our endeavors should be citizen-centered. I am glad to note that various strides have been taken towards this, and this can be evidenced through the various processes and mechanisms that have come into place in the different justice institutions namely Court annexed mediation in the Judiciary, Plea bargaining in the Prosecution, and Judiciary, to name a few. I am confident that with the adoption of the two policies, ADR and criminal justice policies,

other ways of involving citizens in the justice service delivery will be realized sooner than later.

I want to take this opportunity to revisit the five priorities of the current JRLS strategic plan which are:

1. reinforce Rwandan culture and values as a foundation for peace and unity;
2. ensure safety and security of citizens and property;
3. strengthen Justice, Law and Order;
4. enhanced adherence to Human rights;
5. strengthen capacity, service delivery and accountability of public institutions.

I have no doubt that during this retreat, we will revisit most of these segments and assess how far we have gone in their implementation, and thereafter make resolutions of improving areas we have not done well thereof.

With regard to recommendations of the 8th retreat of 2019, I am delighted to note that progress has been made at various institutional levels towards the implementation of the resolutions adopted during that retreat. And I have higher hopes that the resolutions that are still in pipeline will be achieved before the end of the projected period.

Allow me to conclude my remarks by reminding ourselves that, it is easy to talk the talk about justice, but it is another thing to walk the talk, and that is what all Rwandans expect from us. To achieve this, it requires us hard work, professionalism, resilience, courage, integrity, accountability and collaboration.

Our recent history has taught us that when your resolve to succeed is unshakable, no odds/difficulties can stand between you and your goals. I look forward to continuing and deepening our collaboration for a better and efficient delivery of justice for all, the cornerstone of peace, security and prosperity.

Let me end my remarks by wishing you a successful and fruitful retreat, and it is on this note that I officially open **The 9th Retreat of Justice, Reconciliation, Law & Order Sector.**

Thank you for your kind attention.