REPUBLIC OF RWANDA

STATEMENT

BY

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At the High-Level debate on
“The impact of mercenary activities for the security and stability in central Africa”

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New York
Good morning.

I am addressing you today on behalf of His Excellency President Paul Kagame, who was invited in his capacity as Chairperson of the African Union to contribute to this important discussion that will help us highlight the threat posed by mercenary activities to peace and stability in our region. I bring you his greetings and good wishes for the success of this session.

I also take this opportunity, on his behalf, to congratulate His Excellency President Obiang Ngema Mbasogo and the government of Equatorial Guinea, as you steer the work of the United Nations Security Council for the month of February.

You can count on the active support of the African Union and Rwanda throughout your presidency. You represent our common goal to achieve substantial progress in promoting peace and prosperity in Africa and all over the world.

Mr President,

The issue of Mercenaries has a long history in Africa and has presented a grave threat to the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Member States. In reaction to this threat, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) put in place the Convention on the Elimination of Mercenaries in Africa, as adopted by the Heads of State and Government of Member States in 1977.

At that time, the term “mercenaries” was used to refer to persons recruited locally or abroad to fight for financial or material gain. However, this definition, including the mercenary activities covered in the
1977 Convention, may no longer be adequate to describe mercenary activities in Africa today.

It is important to make a difference between the role played by providers of military and security services that are operating within a clear national legal framework and mercenary groups operating clandestinely to provide military support to groups determined to destabilise constitutional order and authority.

Mercenaries are part of a worrying increase of transboundary criminal networks, some well financed with sophisticated communication and military equipment and many connected to global terrorist networks. This Council is aware that Rwanda is among the countries of ICGLR that have been victims of these cross-border terrorist networks, as reported by the Secretary-General to the Council in his report S/2018/11.33. It is for this reason that you can count on our full support for the objectives you have outlined for this session.

Today, mercenaries are not only involved in active combat. We now see an increase in cyber-attacks and industrial espionage carried out by mercenary groups within the comfort of their homes. They continue to evolve and innovative. We cannot and should not be static in our response.

Therefore, the existing policy frameworks of the African Union and also the United Nations Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries of 1989 need to be updated in order for them to cope with emerging realities. On its part, the African Union will review the 1977 Convention on the Elimination of Mercenaries in Africa with a view to further strengthening its provisions.

**Mr President**

In conclusion, to address and neutralize the threat of mercenary activities in Africa, we must take robust measures to deal with this persistent source of instability on our continent. Only collective and well-coordinated approach at regional and international levels, will allow us to end the mercenary phenomenon by disrupting their financial networks, cross border recruitments and therefore defeat their operations.

Thank you for your decision to raise awareness on this critical matter.