

August 31st, 2017.

His Excellency Antonio Guterres
UN Secretary General
UN Headquarters
First Avenue at 46th Street
New York, NY 10017
USA

Your Excellency,

Persecution of Ms. Diane Shima Rwigara in Rwanda

The International Women's Network for Democracy and Peace is deeply concerned about the very precarious situation of Ms. Diane Shima Rwigara which is likely to impact negatively on her physical integrity.

We take this opportunity to bring this problem to your attention because one of the members of the UN, namely Rwanda, is trampling on the global objectives for sustainable development as adopted on the 70th anniversary of this Institution¹.

In 2015, you pledged to work particularly for Peace in the following statement: "We are committed to fostering peaceful, fair and inclusive societies, free from fear and violence. In fact, there can be no sustainable development without peace and peace without sustainable development".

We are drawing to your attention the plight of Miss Diane Rwigara because it is a demonstration of how the Rwandan government is far from promoting a peaceful, fair and inclusive society, free from fear and violence. Miss Shima Rwigara is persecuted just because she dared stand in the latest presidential elections. She was subjected to violence against her intimacy, but refused to be intimidated. By arresting Miss Diane Rwigara and all her family, the government of Rwanda has

¹ http://www.un.org/fr/documents/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/L.85

proven to the whole world that it is determined to continue nurturing a climate of fear and violence.

It's worth recalling that the late Rwigara, father of Diane, died in 2015 in Rwanda, in very suspicious circumstances.

We are very concerned about the failure to meet two specific objectives - objectives 5 and 16 – even though we could also comment on the rest of the objectives.

Objective 5 urges countries to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". The Rwandan government prides itself in having the largest number of female parliamentarians in Africa, if not in the world. Then one wonders how at the same time such a government would not tolerate the emergence of women who do not toe the government line? Ms. Diane Rwigara is joining an already long list of women who were denied the right to exercise their political rights, the most legendary of them being Ms. Victoire Ingabire Umuhoya.

Objective 16, for its part, aims to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels". Rwanda is far from promoting a peaceful society if it does not allow a plural society, where each one of its citizens is free to express themselves. Institutions are far from being accessible to all if anyone who aspires to the highest office in the country risks imprisonment.

Mr Secretary General,

You have pledged to humankind "... to eliminate poverty and hunger in all their forms and in all their dimensions, and to ensure that all human beings can realize their potential in conditions of dignity and equality and in a healthy environment ". In this regards we call up on you to remind Rwanda of its commitments to act in a way that ensures that every human being has the right to realize their potential in acceptable conditions of dignity and equality.

Furthermore, you have pledged to carry out a "... systematic monitoring and review at different levels, in accordance with the modalities provided for in the present Program and in the Addis Ababa Program of Action. And that acting under the endorsement of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, the high-level policy forum would play a central role in global monitoring and review".

We urge you, therefore, to use the powers conferred on you by the General Assembly to ensure that these objectives are implemented in Rwanda. We hope that you will not wait fifteen years before assessing the outcomes and implementations of these objectives by member countries.

The future of the planet is in our hands. "It is also in the hands of young people today, who will pass on the torch to future generations." Mr. Secretary General, we earnestly call on you to ensure that Ms. Diane Shima Rwigara is one of these young people who will pass on the torch of freedom to future generations.

Please accept, your Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Perpétue Muramutse, IwnDP in Canada (signed)

Marcelline Nyiranduwamungu, IwnDP in Belgium (signed)

Gloria Uwishema, IwnDP in the Netherlands (signed)

Copy to:

- European Commission
- Diplomatic and Consular Missions in Kigali- Rwanda
- Women Parliamentarians and Senators of Rwanda, Kigali, Rwanda.