



# RWANDA HIGH COMMISSION IN KENYA

NEWSLETTER ISSUE 5 - October-December

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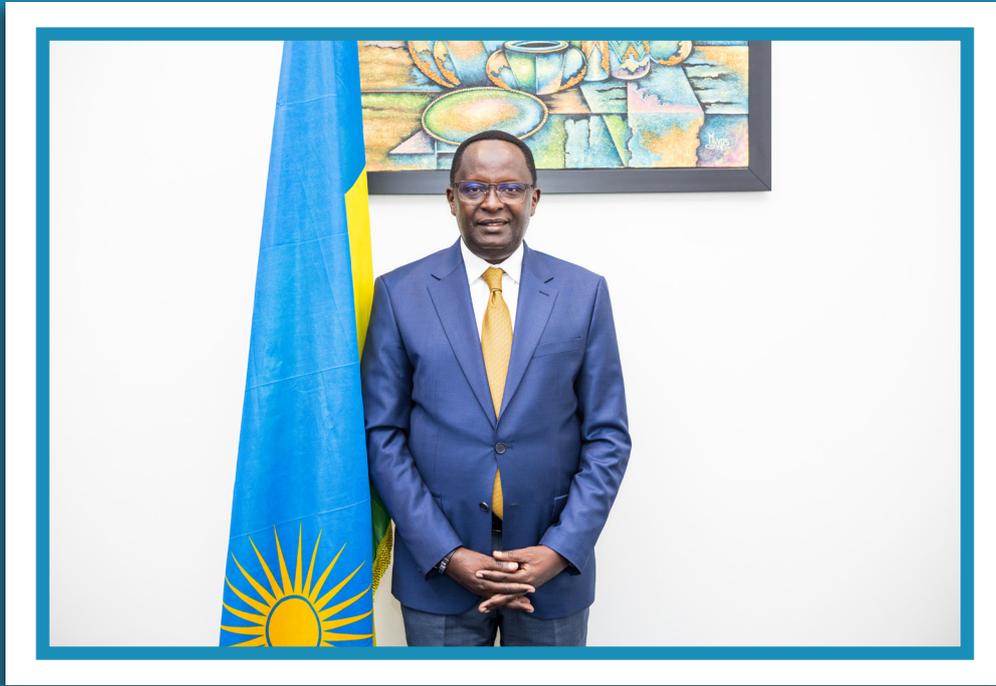


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# Foreword



Dear esteemed reader, on behalf of the High Commission of Rwanda in Kenya, I am delighted to share with you the fifth edition of our quarterly newsletter, covering the period of October to December 2023.

This issue features activities by the High Commission in the mentioned period, major events and developments that happened in Rwanda, the Rwanda-Kenya bilateral relations, and Rwanda's engagements at multilateral level. It covers different sectors such as economy, environment, health, security, and tourism among others.

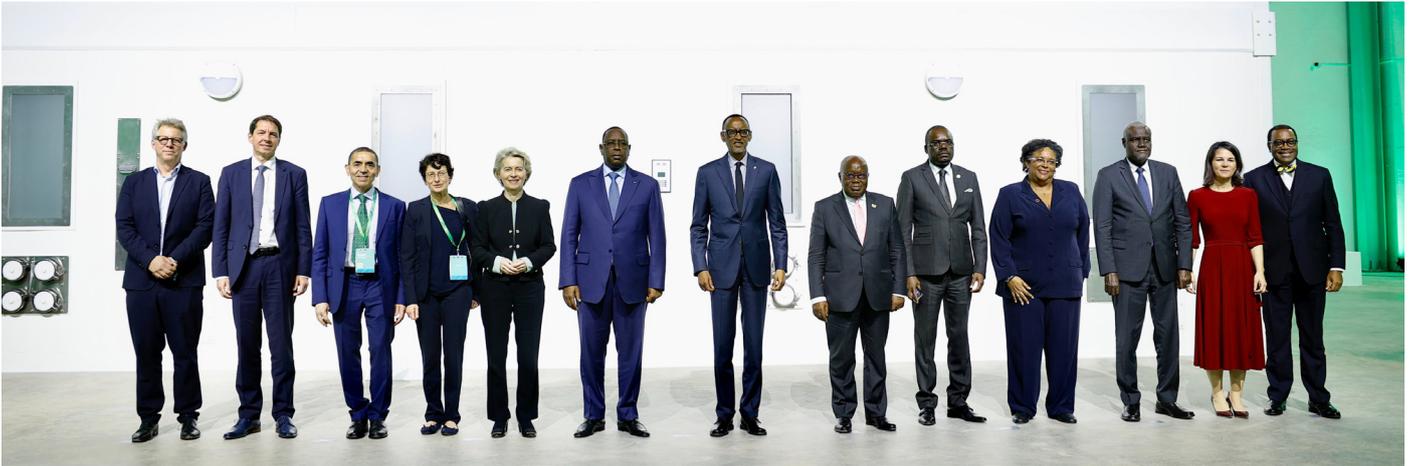
In this edition you will read about Rwanda's economic growth, the country's plan to expand its mining sector, the free visa policy, the inauguration of BioNTech's mRNA vaccines manufacturing plant in Rwanda, and many more.

Meanwhile, through this issue you will also be informed about how Rwanda is re-integrating former members of armed groups into the society, and the country's peace-keeping efforts underway across the continent. Moreover, on the Rwanda-Kenya relations, this edition features the visit of Prime Cabinet Secretary and Cabinet Secretary for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, Musalia Mudavadi, to Rwanda, and other fruitful bilateral exchanges that took place lately.

It is my hope that you will enjoy reading this newsletter and know more about Rwanda, the Land of a Thousand Hills.

**Martin Ngoga,**  
High Commissioner of the  
Republic of Rwanda to Kenya

# BioNTech's first vaccine manufacturing plant in Africa unveiled in Rwanda



Germany-based biotechnology company BioNTech unveiled its first modular mRNA vaccine manufacturing facility in Kigali, Rwanda, to promote sustainable vaccine production and end-to-end vaccine supply in African Union member states.

Construction works for the facility began in June 2022. Located in Kigali Special Economic Zone, in Gasabo District, in a section reserved for biopharma manufacturing, the facility spans approximately 300,000 square meters and is expected to employ at least 100 staff upon reaching full operational capacity.

Speaking at the launch held end last year, Ugur Sahin, the co-founder and CEO of BioNTech, stated that his company plans to complete all construction works at the site and begin local training of specialized personnel in the facility in 2024.

According to Sahin the facility would initially be outfitted with two BioNTainers, one for the production of mRNA, and another for the formulated bulk drug product manufacture. The BioNTainers will be equipped to manufacture a

range of mRNA-based vaccines targeted to the needs of African Union member states, he added.

"Africa will have one of the most advanced manufacturing facilities in the world. These BioNTainers will be able to manufacture any kind of mRNA vaccines," said Sahin, adding that they can produce more than 50 million doses, annually, for regular public supply or during a pandemic, or they can also be used to produce 10,000 mRNA doses for clinical trials.

The company, which developed the Western world's most widely used COVID-19 shot with U.S. partner Pfizer, in 2022 laid out a plan to enable African countries to produce its Comirnaty-branded shot under BioNTech's supervision.

The producer intends to carry out clinical trials in Africa for vaccine candidates targeting malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV, in 2024. If these vaccines are successfully developed and approved by regulatory authorities, BioNTech aims to make them available to lower-income countries at a not-for-profit price.

# Rwanda to lead economic growth in East Africa in 2024



Rwanda's economy is projected to grow to seven per cent in 2024, up from 6.3 per cent in 2023, ranking first in East Africa and third among African countries with high economic growth prospects according to the United Nations 'World Economic Situation and Prospects 2024,' report that predicted slower global economic growth of 2.4 per cent in 2024, from 2.7 per cent in 2023.

Economic growth as a measure of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) takes into account the total market value of all the finished goods and

services produced within a country in a specific period and is a scorecard of a country's economic health.

Among the top ten African countries expected to register high economic growth in 2024, according to the report, Rwanda comes third after Libya and Senegal with 7.6 and 9.2 per cent, respectively. Overall, East Africa is projected to experience economic growth of 5.5 per cent in 2024, up from five per cent in 2023.

Rwanda aspires to attain the Middle-Income Country status by 2035 and High-In-

come Country status by 2050, and the country plans to achieve this through a series of seven-year National Strategies for Transformation (NSTs), underpinned by sectoral strategies focused on meeting the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Meanwhile, the country has also enshrined substantial improvements in living standards in its economic goals, whereby it was one of two countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that achieved all the health Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

# Rwanda earns \$1bn mineral exports in 2023

Rwanda's mineral export revenue in 2023 increased to more than \$1.1 billion, representing a growth of 43 percent, according to the Rwanda Mining Board (RMB). In 2022, the sector had recorded \$772 million, a significant increase from \$516 million in 2021.

According to RMB, the recent growth in export revenue is attributed to increased value addition, continued professionalization, greater investment in mechanization, and the strategic implementation of sustainable and responsible mining practices among others.

As part of its ambitious goals, Rwanda aims to achieve \$1.5 billion in annual mineral export revenues by 2024. To this end, the government actively seeks to attract investments in the mining sector and position Rwanda as a regional hub for processing and trading.

Meanwhile, mineral export earnings for the fourth quarter of 2023 (October to December) reached \$252.99 million, marking a 34.9 percent increase compared to the same



quarter in 2022.

Some of the outstanding minerals that pushed the exports include gold, of which 1,015 kilograms generated \$62.1 million in October, 823 kilograms worth \$52.9 million in November, and 1,320 kilograms worth \$87.5 million in December.

Currently, the Rwanda's mining sector employs more than 72,000 people. Moreover, communities hosting mining activities have benefited from infrastructure and various other projects worth up to Rwf 2 billion distributed through rev-

enue-sharing schemes. The money was spent between 2019 and 2023 on essential projects such as water and electricity supply, medical facilities, and roads among others.

Currently, positioned as one of Africa's best ideal mining investment destinations, Rwanda is yet to fully unlock its sector's potential. Moreover, the country is home to three state-of-the-art value addition facilities namely the gold refinery, tin smelter, and tantalum refinery.

Here's a breakdown of the data in numbers for the Rwanda mineral export revenue:

2021

\$516 million

2022

\$772 million

2023

> \$1.1 billion

# Rwanda, EU strengthen partnership

President Paul Kagame had a fruitful meeting with the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, where they discussed ways to take the EU-Rwanda partnership forward, including with mutually beneficial investments under the EU Global Gateway strategy.

The European Union and its Member States in a Team Europe approach are investing more than €900 million in Rwanda under Global Gateway, Europe's investment programme for the world.

During a meeting in December last year, the two Presidents discussed investment opportunities in areas including health, critical raw materials, the agro-food industry, climate resilience and education.

Meanwhile, President von der Leyen announced an additional €40 million Global Gateway investment in the development of a vibrant biopharmaceutical industry and local manufacturing of vaccines, medicines and health products in Rwanda, which was welcomed by President Kagame.

Moreover, they also witnessed the signature of the Joint Declaration on Critical Raw Materials Value Chains between the Government of Rwanda and the European Investment Bank. The dec-



laration builds on the robust working relationship between the EU and Rwanda in the mining sector, and paves the way for an even more significant and comprehensive strategic partnership in the field of critical raw materials under the Global Gateway strategy.

"As a continent, we still rely heavily on imports for vaccines and medicines. We want to change this, and the long-term solution is to strengthen our manufacturing and scientific capacity. Again, the European Union has been very active in this, trying to support us in this development," said President

Kagame.

Meanwhile, the government of Rwanda confirmed its interest to commence negotiations on an Economic Partnership Agreement with the EU and agreed to launch a process to scope the negotiations.

Moreover, President Kagame and President von der Leyen welcomed Rwanda signing the Samoa Agreement in Brussels just before their bilateral meeting. The agreement will form the foundation of the partnership between the European Union and the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States for the next 20 years.

# Africa's biggest entrepreneurship hub Norrsken inaugurated in Kigali



Sweden's Norrsken Foundation, a co-working space and investment fund based in Stockholm, unveiled its tech fund and entrepreneurship hub in Rwanda, citing the need to support ventures across the region.

The campus, also known as Africa's biggest hub for entrepreneurship, was officially launched by President Paul Kagame during the Norrsken Africa Week.

The Kigali campus is Norrsken's first launch out-

side of Sweden, and the organization attributes the decision to the country's progress over the last decade on infrastructure, increasing internet penetration, and improving its business environment, despite a relatively small tech scene.

Nestled in the commercial and business center of Kigali, the campus, already home to some 1,200 local and international start-ups, initially began with seed investments of \$25,000 to

\$100,000 for early-stage start-ups in all sectors. The fund size could also be extended to larger series-stage investments from \$100,000 to \$1 million in the future.

During the inauguration ceremony in Kigali, President Paul Kagame pointed out that it is high time investors considered Africa as an opportunity for investments.

Kagame also maintained that Africa has the capacity to tap into and grow and connect with the rest of the world, "for our own success but also for the success of the rest of the world so the investors need just not look at Africa as a big market which it is, but also a thriving society, that to a great extent will match or even supersede actually what exists elsewhere."

Founded in 2016, the Norrsken ecosystem is a global non-profit dedicated to helping entrepreneurs solve the world's greatest challenges. Africa's technology and innovation landscape has always taken on some of the continent's biggest challenges, and a string of success stories have further highlighted the continent's potential.

# CS Mudavadi visits Rwanda, meets President Kagame



In early October, President Paul Kagame received Musalia Mudavadi, Kenya's Prime Cabinet Secretary and Cabinet Secretary for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, who delivered a message from President William Samoei Ruto.

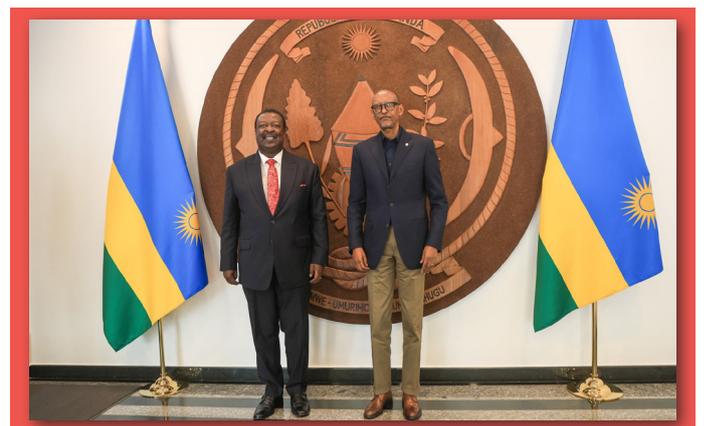
The visit was an opportunity to discuss ways of enhancing unity and shared prosperity among the two brotherly countries, and to exchange on how cooperation within East African Community (EAC) member states can be strengthened.

"This visit highlights Kenya's unwavering commitment to nurturing and reinforcing the strong bonds of friendship and cooperation that exist between Nairobi and Kigali," said CS Mudavadi.

Meanwhile, during the discussions, President Kagame also expressed Rwanda's strong commitment to formulating a collab-

orative strategy aimed at unlocking the economic potential of the region.

Rwanda and Kenya enjoy a long-standing strategic partnership in areas of mutual interest such as trade, education, agriculture, and many others. The two countries also work together in different areas under the framework of the East African Community (EAC) of which they are both member states.



# Rwanda commends Kenya for successfully hosting YouthConnekt Africa Summit



Rwanda's Minister of ICT and Innovation, Paula Ingabire, has lauded Kenya for successfully hosting the sixth edition of YouthConnekt Africa Summit which brought together 20,000 young people from across the continent.

Minister Ingabire said this end last year while giving her remarks at the official opening ceremony of the Summit, on behalf of the Government of Rwanda, a ceremony which was graced by President William Ruto.

She also congratulated President Ruto for announcing a visa-free policy, a move she said will undoubtedly allow young Africans to scale their businesses across the continent without unnecessary restrictions.

The summit ran under the theme "Youth innovating a borderless african renaissance".

sance".

Meanwhile, President Ruto thanked his Rwandan counterpart President Paul Kagame for conceiving the YouthConnekt platform and for hosting four editions of this Summit.

"I join President Kagame in affirming the game-changing capacity of the African youth," President Ruto added.

Moreover, President Ruto encouraged young Africans "to play a leading role in the transformation of Africa to ensure their voice is heard, their efforts counted, and their participation assured."

YouthConnekt Africa Summit is a Pan-African initiative that seeks to connect African youth for socio-economic transformation. Its inception came following consecutive annual Rwandan youth gatherings between 2012 and 2016, after which it was agreed that effective 2017 the initiative would go continental to benefit the African youth at large.

The summit has so far been hosted by Rwanda, Ghana, and Kenya.



# High Commissioner Ngoga meets Rwandans in Mombasa

High Commissioner Martin Ngoga met more than 200 Rwandans living in Mombasa.

In the meeting, the High Commissioner thanked the Rwandan community for their active participation in programmes of the government of Rwanda, and encouraged them to continue contributing to the country's development.

Meanwhile, he urged them to continue abiding by the laws of Kenya and ensure that they preserve the good image of their home country wherever they are.



During the visit to Mombasa, the High Commissioner also paid courtesy calls on different Kenyan officials. He called on Arthur Sewe, Chairman of East African Tea Trade Association (EATTA), where they exchanged on the significant

role played by the Association in facilitating tea trade in the region.

Moreover, the High Commissioner had a fruitful meeting with Capt. William K. Ruto, the Managing Director of Kenya Ports Authority (KPA). He hailed the role of Mombasa Port as a major gateway to Rwanda, and appreciated the port's tremendous positive improvements.

On his side, Capt. Ruto pledged to address existing bottlenecks, to ensure uninterrupted movement of Rwanda-bound cargo at the port.

## High Commissioner Ngoga, DPP Ingonga discuss harnessing mutual collaboration



In mid-November, High Commissioner Martin Ngoga paid a courtesy call on Kenya's Director of Public Prosecution (DPP), Renson Ingonga.

They exchanged on areas of continued mutual collaboration, including Mutual Legal Assistance, joint trainings and benchmarking visits among others.

Moreover, they both acknowledged the role of continued cooperation between Kenya and Rwanda in the judicial sector, and underlined that there are untapped potential areas of cooperation that can be considered going forward, for mutual benefits.

Over the years, Rwanda and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution have been cooperating on issues of mutual legal assistance in several cases.

# Rwandans participate in regional tourism expo in Nairobi



**The expo, brought together over 250 exhibitors from across the region.**



Rwandan companies in the tourism sector participated in the latest joint East African Regional Tourism Expo (EARTE) and the Magical Kenya Travel Expo (MKTE) in Nairobi, showcasing the numerous tourist attraction sites of the country, and trade opportunities therein.

The expo, which brought together over 250 exhibitors from across the region, intends to showcase the region's diverse tourism offerings to consumers and traders, and is hosted by the East African Community member states on a rotational basis.

During the opening ceremony of the exhibition, High Commissioner Martin Ngoga commended Kenya for hosting the expo, stressing that the initiative not only offers an opportunity to market the tourism potential of each East African country, but also the region as a whole.

Meanwhile, he shared Rwanda's efforts in promoting and diversifying the tourism sector, including positioning the country as a continental MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) destination and a regional sports hub.

He also encouraged participants to visit the country and have a first-hand memorable experience.

Among Rwanda's remarkable touristic sites include Volcanoes National Park which is home to endangered mountain gorillas, 200 species of colorful birds and the rare golden monkey among others.

Nyungwe National Park, one of the oldest rainforests in Africa and currently on UNESCO's World Heritage List, is another go-to site while visiting Rwanda, to have a feel of the park's rich and beautiful biodiversity.

# Rwanda hosts over 200 Sudanese students to continue their studies



Rwanda has welcomed more than 200 Sudanese students to resume their medical studies at the University of Rwanda (UR), after schools in Sudan were closed because of the ongoing war.

The students underwent an induction end last year at UR's Huye Campus, and they are expected to spend the first two years of their medical studies at the same university.

Omar Bashir Taha, one of the students from University of Medical Sciences and Technolo-

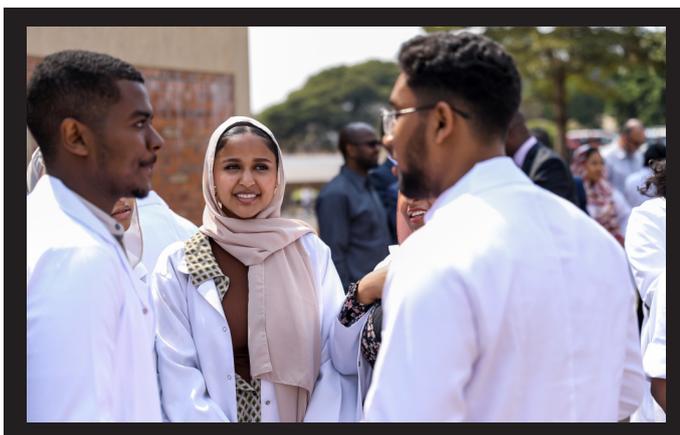
gies (UMST) in Khartoum, said he had lost hope of continuing his studies, but now feels happy that he is finally going back to school.

"After seven months without studying, adjusting will take time and effort, but I eagerly anticipate the experience. The labs I saw here were impeccably clean with state-of-the-art equipment, and the teachers, along with their 15 assistants, all hold Ph.D.s. I have high expectations to learn from the best in this new academic environment," he said.

Moreover, Prof. Mamoun Homeida, Chairman Board of Trustees at UMST, Khartoum, praised Rwanda's gesture to accommodate Sudanese students and referred to it as a display of "pan-Africanism."

He also added that the decision to choose Rwanda was against the back-drop of the country's peace, tranquility, and impressive development.

It is expected that more students from the same university will also be gradually transferred to Rwanda to complete their studies.



# Rwanda welcomes 169 additional asylum seekers from Libya



A total of 169 asylum seekers from Libya originating from Eritrea, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan safely arrived in Rwanda in November last year, becoming the 15th group of African refugees and asylum seekers evacuated from the North African country to Rwanda.

The evacuation is thanks to an arrangement reached in 2019 between the Government of Rwanda, United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), and the African Union's Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM), with the aim of saving lives of refugees and asylum seekers who would put their lives in danger while attempting to illegally cross the Mediterranean Sea.

This latest group follows another 134 refugees who were repatriated to Rwanda in June last year, which consisted of 64 from Eritrea, 35 from Sudan, 15 from Somalia, 17 from Ethiopia, two from Cameroon, and one from Mali.

The 15th group, just like the previous ones, will be accommodated in Gashora Transit Center,

Eastern Province, which hosts other evacuees who arrived before through the ETM. The mission of the transit center is to provide lifesaving protection, assistance, and long-term solutions to vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers trapped in Libya, through a temporary evacuation to Rwanda.

From Rwanda, they are helped to find third countries to host them, get relocated back to their countries of origin or choose to stay in Rwanda where they are granted residency.

In total, so far, at least 1,796 people have been evacuated, many of whom UNHCR has been able to find countries to take them in as part of the emergency transit mechanism.

Rwanda has a record of welcoming refugees, a practice it borrows from its dark history whereby many Rwandans were forced to seek refuge in near and far countries before and during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. Generally, the country is now home to more than 135,000 refugees, mostly from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Burundi.

# Rwanda reintegrates over 70,000 ex-combatants into the community



Grace Ntamitondero fled Rwanda at the age of three with her parents after the then Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA) defeated the genocidal regime and stopped the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. Her family went to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where she lived until her early 30s.

In her testimony, Ntamitondero says during her time in DRC she later joined FDLR (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda) – an armed anti-Rwanda group based in Eastern DRC, composed of genocide perpetrators and their descendants.

“Our main goal was to capture Rwanda, because in the forests they used to tell us that in Rwanda there are Tutsi only and a few Hutu who have been colonized by the current regime,” she narrates, adding that “After hearing these stories, we would say we will take over the country and get rid of Tutsi.”

Thanks to initiatives by the Government of Rwanda under the Rwanda Demobilization and Integration Commission (RDIC), Ntamitondero got to learn that the Rwanda of today is different from that she was told by FDLR genocidal group, and hence decided to return home.

“The way we were welcomed from the forests, we could see Rwandans are now united, and that ethnic divisions were no more,” She stressed.

Her testimony is similar to that of Faustin Ndikumana, another ex-combatant of FDLR. He narrates that the reason it took him long to return to his motherland was the ideological manipulation of his former leaders in FDLR.

“They would tell us that everyone who returns to Rwanda is killed. But after knowing that my parents, whom I had left in Rwanda when I fled the country, are still alive, I decided to come back. I want to encourage those still in the jungles to lay down arms and return home because the country is safe for everyone,” he explained.

Ndikumana and Ntamitondero are part of a group of 84 ex-combatants discharged in November last year after completing a Pre-Discharge Orientation Program (PDOP), the 70th of its kind.

So far, in total, 71,828 ex-combatants have returned to the country and have been reintegrated in the community, where they are currently contributing to the country’s development.

Meanwhile, former members of rebel groups who have been reintegrated into the community say they regret the time they wasted believing lies and attempting an impossible mission of overthrowing the government of Rwanda.

“It is now 29 years and the mission is still the same- ousting the current government. Many have already come back to their senses and returned home, and I am sure it is just a matter of time before the remaining ones also realize how impossible their mission is,” said Ntamitondero.

Findings of the External Independent Evaluation reports of 2018 and 2022 have concluded that, generally, ex-combatants are as socially accepted and economically active as other community members in Rwanda. The same reports also established that these ex-combatants are as active in mainstream programs, including being elected into leadership positions, as other citizens.

# Mozambicans laud Rwandan troops for assuring them safety, security



"We're very happy with the presence of the Rwandan army. We are now safe. Rwandans brought us peace," a resident of Mocimboa told a group of journalists who toured Mozambique at the end of last year.

Jonas Alvaro José, an English teacher in the area also stressed the situation is much better compared to the previous times.

"Right now things are a more controlled. I would say things are improved. And, if we compare the moments when the attack took place to now, I would say things are much better now because people can move, and we can do everything. we can go to school, we can buy whatever we want, so things are okay now," he said.

Rwandan forces were deployed to Mozambique in

July 2021 at the request of the Mozambican President, Filipe Nyusi, to support the Mozambican government's efforts in combating insurgency in the northern province of Cabo Delgado. The insurgency, which began in 2017, involved militant groups affiliated with the Islamic State (IS).

The country's deployment in Mozambique aimed to provide military assistance, training, and support to Mozambican forces in their efforts to counter the insurgency. The



deployment was seen as a contribution to regional stability and an effort to address the humanitarian crisis resulting from the conflict.

Moreover, one should highlight that before the bilateral arrangement Rwanda had already sent troops to Mozambique as part of a mission authorized by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and supported by the African Union (AU).

Over the years, Rwanda has been actively involved in international peacekeeping efforts, contributing troops to various United Nations (UN) and African Union (AU) missions. The country's involvement in peacekeeping reflects a broader commitment to regional and global stability, drawing on its own experiences of conflict and genocide to contribute to the prevention and resolution of conflicts in other parts of the world.

Over the years, Rwanda's contributions to peacekeeping have been recognized internationally, and Rwandan peacekeepers have received commendations for their professionalism and dedication to their missions in areas like Darfur, Sudan and the Central Africa Republic.

# Rwanda ranked fifth in environmentally sustainable index



Rwanda has made significant progress in sustainability initiatives, ranking it as the fifth most environmentally sustainable country in Africa according to a report released in November, 2023.

The Middle East and Africa Environmental Sustainability Scorecard report commissioned by Agility, a global supply chain services company, and compiled by Horizon Group—a Geneva-based firm specializing in research and analysis—offers a comprehensive evaluation of government and business initiatives, applauding countries' commitments to environmental sustainability.

The scorecard assesses 17 countries using six key indi-

cators: green investment and technology, sustainable infrastructure and transportation, governance and reporting, energy transition, environmental ecosystems, and circularity.

Rwanda came fifth on the list topped by South Africa, United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, and it was followed by Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, Morocco, Qatar, Tanzania, Nigeria, Bahrain, Kuwait, Cote d'Ivoire, Oman, and Mozambique.

In the face of challenges resulting from climate change, with developing countries being the most affected, Rwanda has moved to intensify efforts with the main goal of accelerating private sector-led economic growth and

increased productivity, with a focus on stimulating sustainable environmental and natural resource management in order to transition to a green economy.

Moreover, under its Nationally Determined Contributions (NCDs) to Paris Agreement, Rwanda has committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 38 per cent by 2030 compared to a business-as-usual scenario on condition of international support and funding which complements domestic resources.

The commitment is estimated at \$11 billion in investment cost and it revolves around matters such as water security, agriculture, land and forestry, settlements, and health.

# COP 28: Rwanda welcomes decision to transition away from fossil fuel



The Government of Rwanda welcomed the ground-breaking decision made at the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP28) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), marking a significant step towards a more sustainable future and achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement.

The historic resolution, known as the UAE Consensus, calls for a tripling of renewable energy generation and a global transition away from fossil fuels, aligning with Rwanda's commitment to addressing climate change.

Rwanda has an ambitious goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 and promote a circular economy. As part of its commitment to the resolution, Rwanda will implement strategies and initiatives that promote renewable energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable practices across all sectors.

Meanwhile, at COP28, Rwanda joined the Global renewables and energy efficiency pledge, which calls for a tripling of the world's installed renewable energy generation capacity by 2030. During the Summit, Kigali also launched its National Carbon Market Framework in a significant stride towards a greener and more sustainable future.

## Rwanda receives awards for green investment

During COP28, Rwanda was awarded for green transport investment and the Green City Kigali project. The awards are divided into two categories, with other African countries also receiving awards in various categories.

The awards include one dedicated to President Paul Kagame as the "Presidential Transport Investment Statesman of the Year" among other "Presidential Climate Investment Statesman of the Year" winners.

Rwanda is currently implementing different initiatives in greening transport by investing in electric vehicles and greening the new international airport being constructed in Bugesera District, located in the Eastern Province of Rwanda. The airport will be connected to the regional Rusumo hydroelectric power plant as a way to promote the use of renewable energy.

Meanwhile, the second award dubbed "Best Financeable City Initiative of the Year" was given to the Green City Kigali project, under which 2,000 'green homes' will be constructed through a public-private partnership under the project. Additionally, this Green City will have an integrated transport system that will allow people to use any means of transport at a very minimum distance.



## RwandAir to nearly double fleet in the next five years

Rwanda's national carrier, RwandAir, plans to nearly double its fleet to 25 planes from the current 14 by the end of the fiscal year 2028.

According to Yvonne Makolo, the airline's Chief Executive, RwandAir aims at better connecting underserved markets in Africa and boost the continent's reach to global destinations, including the Middle East.

RwandAir currently serves 25 destinations, 20 of which are within the African continent to countries such as Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa. It also flies to cities in Europe and the Middle East including Paris, London, Brussels, Dubai and Doha.

Meanwhile, the carrier's plan is to grow its route network to 39 destinations in five years, mainly within the African continent. Even though affordable air travel is still a "big challenge" in the African continent, RwandAir aims to position Kigali as a regional hub and an alternative to other hubs in Africa.

"The potential is within the continent and RwandAir is very focused on that, on seeing how we can open up and connect different African countries with fifth freedom rights, and how we can connect Rwanda to African countries, then connect the continent to the rest of the world," Makolo stressed.

# What you need to know about Rwanda's visa-free policy



The ease of entry into Rwanda has been a work-in-progress, with many reforms made over the years to make the country more open to visitors and businesspeople, in a bid to harness cooperation, people to people diplomacy, and economic growth, particularly through tourism.

During the 23rd World Travel and Tourism Council Global Summit that took place in Kigali, President Paul Kagame said, "Any African can get on a plane to Rwanda whenever they wish and will not pay a thing to enter our country."

Moreover, he among others went on to urge close collaboration with partners to continue "developing Africa into a premier destination for global travel."

The latest changes, which include visa waivers for citizens of more than 100 countries over a specific period, are contained in Rwanda's Visa Regime of March 10, 2020. As of 2018, Rwanda's policy was largely based on the visa-on-arrival principle, without requiring prior application.

On the pricing aspect, visa fees must not exceed \$50 for a single entry visa or \$70 for a multiple entry visa, meaning the holder can enter the destination country more than once.

Below are the things you need to know about the Rwanda's Visa Regime

## **EAC citizens enjoy a visa-free stay of six months**

Citizens of East African Community (EAC) member states travelling on ordinary, service,

and diplomatic passports are allowed to stay in Rwanda for six months without being obliged to get a visa.

Currently, the EAC is composed of eight member states, namely Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, South Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Somalia which joined the regional bloc recently.

A 30-day visa-free stay for AU, Commonwealth, and La Francophonie citizens

Rwanda, being a member of the African Union (AU), The Commonwealth, and La Francophonie, has made it easy for fellow member states in these organisations to enter the country, whereby their citizens do not need visas to enter and stay in Rwanda for up to 30 days.

## **No visa required for a stay of 90 days for some countries**

Meanwhile, based on bilateral arrangements, there are specific countries whose citizens travelling on ordinary passports enjoy a 90-day visa-free stay in Rwanda. These include Angola, Benin, Central African Republic, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Indonesia, Haiti, Mauritius, Philippines, Senegal, Seychelles, Singapore, Sierra Leone, and the State of Qatar among others.

# Inside Mantis Kivu Queen- Rwanda's floating hotel



Fully built in Rwanda, Mantis Kivu Queen is a luxury expedition vessel that allows you to explore the stunning African Great waterways, Lake Kivu, located in Western Province.

Kivu Queen started operating in Rwanda in December last year, serving as a gateway for travelers to explore Rwanda's treasures.

The five-star floating hotel offers 10 modern cabins and suits: 6 standard cabins, 2 deluxe cabins and 2 executive suites. It also has a plunge pool, jacuzzi, a dining salon, a bar, and a viewing deck that allows tourists to explore some of Rwanda's desirable sceneries.

The boat, managed by Mantis collection under Accor Group, the largest hospitality company in Europe and the sixth-largest hospitality company worldwide, was de-

signed to provide passengers with a holiday including accommodation and entertainment prioritizing onboard amenities and comfort.

One of the highlights of the journey pre or post sailing onboard the Kivu Queen is the unique opportunity to connect with nature by visiting both chimpanzees in the Nyungwe Forest National Park and the majestic gorillas in the Volcanoes National Park.

Other experiences include excursions to local fishing communities to learn their traditional fishing techniques, exploring subtropical hiking trails, kayaking through the pristine waters and bird watching. Guests can also explore the smaller islands dotting Lake Kivu, including Napoleon Island, Teddy Bear Island, Monkey Island and Peace Island.

# Trace Awards: Rwanda further positions itself as an entertainment hub

Hosted on the African continent for the first time, Trace Awards, the biggest music awarding ceremony in Africa, was among the major highlights in Kigali's entertainment industry in 2023.

The awards debut brought over 55 global celebrities to Kigali to celebrate the diversity and power of Afro-urban culture at the BK Arena in October.

Some of Africa's biggest stars, including Davido and Rema, scored big while Diamond Platnumz and 49 other artistes graced the stage of the awards that were watched by millions of people from across the world.

The Trace Awards and Music Festival were considered a huge success, with Rwanda taking credit for the annual showbiz event. Rwandan artistes were not the only

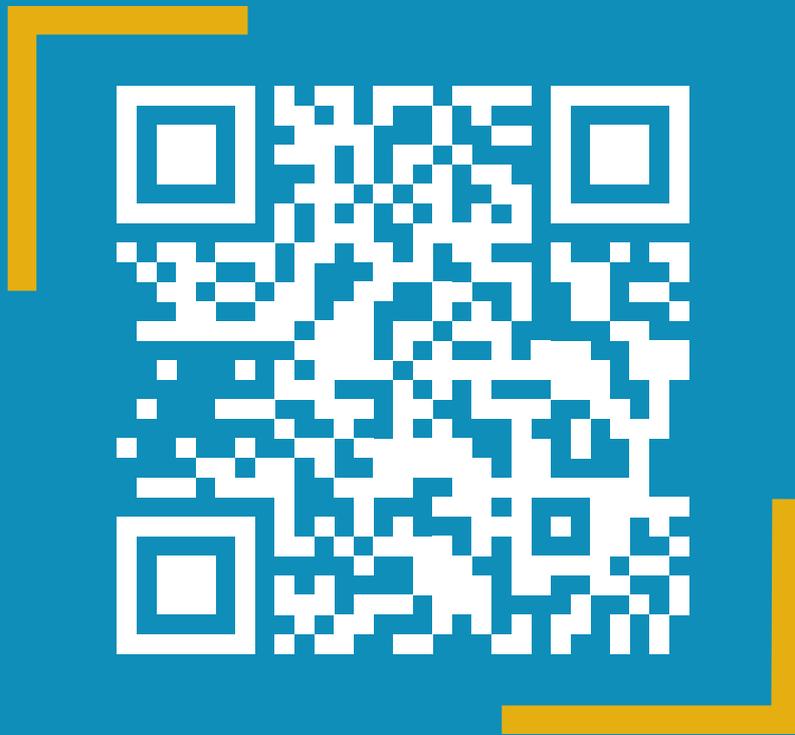
ones to benefit greatly from the platform the awards gave them, but also Rwandan brands and creatives who were given an opportunity to shine during the festival.

Meanwhile, among other major entertainment events that took place in Kigali were 'Move Afrika: A Global Citizen Experience', Africa's first ever music tour.

Headlined by Grammy Award winning artist Kendrick Lamar, the festival was the first-ever Move Afrika event and Kigali earned its place as the host of this thrilling and impact driven initiative in December.

For Rwanda's MICE industry, the entertainment events were a game-changer, validating the country's investments in infrastructure and its ability to host major events.





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