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LETTER DATED 15 NOVEMBER 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF RWANDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF
THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Following our conversation of this morning regarding the situation of Rwandan refugees in eastern Zaire and subsequent to the developments of the past 48 hours, I have the honour to inform you, and through you the Security Council, that thousands of Rwandan refugees who had been captives and hostages of the Interahamwe militia and the genocidal leadership of the former Government of Rwanda are now returning to Rwanda.

Over the past 48 hours we have been recording refugees crossing the border at a rate of 100 per minute. We expect that by early next week the majority of Rwandan refugees will have arrived back in their motherland.

The Government of Rwanda welcomes this long-awaited return of its nationals. We believe that the conditions for the continued orderly return of many more refugees are now in place.

I am also happy to inform the Council that the entire Cabinet today accompanied the President of the Republic of Rwanda to the Zairian border town of Goma to welcome the refugees as they arrived.

The local and government machinery has been mobilized throughout the country to prepare reception centres for refugees to receive them before they return to their own homes.

In view of the above-mentioned welcome developments, it is the view of the Government of Rwanda that the proposed multinational force is no longer relevant as far as rescuing Rwandan refugees in eastern Zaire is concerned.

Since the situation in eastern Zaire has changed, plans for the proposed multinational force should also be changed to adapt to the changing situation on the ground. In this regard, the multinational force should be smaller, the location of its troops should be reconsidered and a new mandate defined to enable it to address its purely humanitarian mission as rapidly as possible. The mandate of the multinational force should be for a limited period - two to three months at the utmost.

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The mandate of the proposed multinational force should be reconsidered in view of the changing circumstances on the ground such that its task would be to disarm the ex-Rwandan Government soldiers and militia who have held thousands of Rwandan refugees captive in camps in eastern Zaire. It is also the view of my Government that the international community should help by providing adequate resources to facilitate the rehabilitation and integration of the returning refugees.

In this regard, the Government of Rwanda would like to urge the Council not to be hasty in adopting a resolution before the full facts about the changing circumstances on the ground can be obtained. That being the case, the Government of Rwanda would have no problem.

The humanitarian assistance that is required should be brought inside Rwanda in order to cater for the humanitarian needs that have recently arisen.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Gideon KAYINAMURA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Rwanda
to the United Nations
