Rwandan Official Wary of UN Commitment To Stop Genocide

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UNITED NATIONS – Rwanda's foreign minister on Sunday questioned whether world leaders would ever make good on new promises to act in times of genocide like the one that devastated his nation 11 years ago.

One of the most lauded elements of a document that came out of a three-day UN summit that ended Friday was world leader's recognition of a collective responsibility to protect people from genocide, war crimes and ethnic cleansing.

But Rwanda's foreign minister, Charles Murigande, told the annual UN General Assembly debate that his country would wait until nations again confront such a crisis before declaring that responsibility a success.

"Action, not words, would be the measure of our success or failure," Murigande said. "Will there be lengthy academic or legal debates on what constitutes genocide or crimes against humanity while people die?"

Rwanda's 1994 genocide saw more than 500,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus massacred during three months. The powerful UN Security Council largely stood by as the killing took place.

Murigande said few countries were more interested in UN reform than Rwanda because there is not other nation where the UN has "consistently neglected to learn from its mistakes, resulting in massive loss of life and untold misery."

He accused the UN of again failing to live up to its promises because Rwandan appeals for the arrest of those who perpetrated the genocide have gone unanswered. Many of them fled to the lawless east of neighboring Congo, where they have become a destabilizing force against that country's government as well.

Murigande demanded that neighboring countries turn over Rwanda genocide suspects, and if they don't, that the Security Council take action.

"We find it inexplicable that while some states profess commitment to Charter, human rights and international law, they allow known suspects of the Rwanda genocide to live in their countries," he said.