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## DAY ONE OF DPM SEES LAUNCH OF MAJOR DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR RWANDA: THE EDPRS

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KIGALI, RWANDA – The 2007 Government of Rwanda and Development Partners Meeting (DPM), which opened today at the Serena Hotel in Kigali, saw the launch of an ambitious, comprehensive strategy for Rwanda’s development over the next five years.

The Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) was presented to senior officials from the Government of Rwanda and to representatives of development partners, including bilateral agencies, multilateral institutions, civil society and the private sector.

His Excellency President Paul Kagame, who opened the DPM with a keynote speech, emphasized the importance of a strong private sector to reducing poverty in Rwanda. “There has been sometimes a lot of talk about income inequalities. However, the biggest problem is that there has been no income,” said President Kagame. “Economic growth, as well as broad based poverty reduction must be our primary focus in the coming years” He also stressed the importance of improving the business environment and creating employment opportunities. “Our country’s prospects cannot be separated from agriculture”, he added. “Raising agricultural productivity in addition to food security and adequate investment in the agribusiness industry is much needed.”

The EDPRS sets out a number of key priorities that are vital for Rwanda’s development. These include: moving towards a knowledge-based economy; transforming the agriculture sector away from subsistence; investing in infrastructure to create a business-friendly environment, and improving Rwandans’ quality of life by monitoring population growth and enhancing rural health services.

The Strategy also contains three cross-cutting focus areas – growth for jobs and exports, Vision 2020 Umurenge, and governance – which are designed to ensure that the implementation of the strategy is completed in an efficient and transparent manner that promotes economic development while ensuring the benefits are felt by all Rwandans, regardless of social or economic status.

Mr. Moustapha Soumaré, Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Rwanda, praised the Government on behalf of development partners for the level of inclusiveness involved in the elaboration of the EDPRS. “A year-long consultative process brought together stakeholders from

different corners of Rwandan society, to ensure an even greater degree of ownership on the part of the Rwandan citizen,” said Mr. Soumaré.” Soumaré also highlighted some sectors where progress had been made like education, health and agriculture. ‘The health sector is seeing progress and is beginning to benefit from a Sector-Wide Approach. The rate of people accessing health care services has doubled during the last five years. Decentralized services ensure greater equity across the population.” Mr. Soumaré said.

The DPM discusses how development partners can support the Government in implementing the EDPRS. The UK’s Minister for International Development, Shriti. Vadera echoed President Kagame’s opinion that private sector growth is a necessary condition for long-term poverty reduction. “I strongly share [the President’s] view that the purpose of aid is to no longer require it,” Minister Vadera told the meeting. “ To this end, she announced a joint initiative funded by DFID, the World Bank, the African Development Bank and other donors to support the government in a program dedicated to identifying and addressing the biggest constrains to sustained economic growth in Rwanda.

Monday’s sessions also featured a preview of the 2007 Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Report, produced by the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) to showing progress toward reaching the UN-set eight goals for global development by the year 2015. “The MDGs Report provides an excellent snapshot of Rwanda’s development,” said NISR Director General, Dr. Louis Munyakazi. “It shows that the country has made significant progress and that with sustained and targeted investment, the attainment of the MDGs is within our reach’. On the Global Update Rwanda appears as the only African country to be cited twice as a success story: in women’s representation and malaria control. Another example of progress is MDG 2 on literacy levels among 15 – 24 year olds which rose from 57.4 % in 2000 to 76.8 % in 2006. Also completion rate in primary school has increased from 22 % to 51.7 % in 2006.

The 2007 DPM concludes tomorrow with sessions dedicated to specific EDPRS priority sectors, including regional integration, governance and justice. Development partners will make official statements in response to Government presentations, and an official DPM Communiqué will be agreed upon by all delegates to the meeting.