In the period before and during the genocide, little attention was paid to the situation in Rwanda. It is remarkable that ten years later the attention was enormous, and it was almost unanimously accepted that states and international organizations failed tremendously by not acting to prevent or stop that genocide. Not only scholars, but political leaders all over the world now realized what happened and how the role they played as bystanders was miserable. By not acting and even withholding all instruments to stop or diminish the ongoing atrocities, the bystander states and bystander international organizations contributed to the killings by allowing the genocidaires to go on. In this chapter we will deal with this remorse and the subsequent apologies that were made by the leaders of some of these states and organizations. Moreover, we will pay attention to the more concrete lessons learned from the Rwandan tragedy.

18.1 APOLOGIES FROM BELGIUM

The Belgian Prime Minister, Guy Verhofstadt, made a speech on April 7, 2004, in the stadium of Kigali. Verhofstadt of the Liberal Party—which was not represented in the Belgian government in 1994—was the head of the parliamentary inquiry commission and made his excuses in public.1 The Belgian delegation also consisted of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs (Louis Michel), Defense (André Flahaut) and Development Cooperation (Marc Verwilghen).2 Verhofstadt was clear on his feelings in his speech: “I am moved because I can gauge the infinite sadness that your memories must still evoke. The memory of such an abominable tragedy cannot help but revive horrifying images. No words, no discussion, nothing can describe this sorrow.”3 He did not forget to “Pour demander pardon au nom de mon pays;” see http://www.diplomatie.be/fr/presse/speechdetails.asp?TEXTID=17615.4 Het Volk (Belgian Newspaper), April 6, 2004.5 See http://www.diplomatie.be/fr/presse/speechdetails.asp?TEXTID=17615. Translated from French into English. Original text: “Je suis ému parce que je mesure bien l’infinité tristesse que vos souvenirs doivent encore revêtir. Le souvenir d’un drame aussi abominable ne peut que ramener des images horrifiantes. Aucun mot, aucune parole, rien ne peut décrire cette douleur.”

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mention the killed Belgian blue helmets: “The memory of our assassinated compatriots is intimately mixed in with the memory of the Rwandans who they tried in vain to protect. From now on all of these deaths are also and will always be our compatriots.”

He focused very strongly on his own responsibility, not just in a general way, because everyone is responsible, but stressed the failure: “We have all failed in our task, some because they didn’t do enough, others because they remained indifferent. We also failed ourselves. We failed because rather than staying to assume our responsibility, we preferred to ignore the horror and the atrocity. We failed because of our most elementary duty, the duty to intervene and the duty of fraternity.” It is important that he referred in these words to the indifference, which is characteristic of the bystander who does not act and does not want to act and therefore prefers not to know what is happening. Indeed Verhofstadt was right when he said that the bystander prefers not to know but really is aware of everything that happens, and thus the bystander cannot pretend to be ignorant. Moreover, in this quotation, he is making “the duty to intervene” an international norm in these circumstances, a norm that legally did not exist but that is increasingly emerging in a moral sense. This norm may, as a result, be seen nowadays as an emerging norm of international law as well, as has been proposed by the international panel group some years later.

18.2 APOLOGIES FROM THE UNITED STATES

The speech of President Bill Clinton was given four years after the genocide in 1998. It is seen as a statement of public remorse and “something of an apology,” with the following words: “We in the United States and the world community did not do as much as we could have and should have done to try to limit what occurred.” On his own role, he said at the airport in Kigali: “All

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