

Statement of Mary-Lyse Numuhoza, Chair of Friends of Victoire

**Committee Room 4, House of Lords, Westminster
Monday 23rd March 2015**

**Empowering Women - Empowering Humanity "Picture It"
organised by UNIVERSAL PEACE FEDERATION-UK**

"Let us speak out and raise the flag for those who have been denied democracy" by Rt. Hon. Baroness Verma - Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change

"Political dialogues are possible - Politicians can force decisions to be made at national and international level" by Rt. Hon Seema Malhotra MP

Women can achieve empowerment if we work together and support one another. But one needs to choose area of expertise as women empowerment is needed in all level of society not only in domestic violence or health issues. I personally after joining UPF (universal Peace Federation) since 2008 and becoming the Ambassador of peace, I realised that my field of focus around women empowerment would be "women and leadership". However that it is my responsibility to take a lead toward achieving empowerment so as to be able to empower others, I am now an elected member of UK WILPF (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom) executive board member. We, women we have the determination and resilience to achieve what we set ourselves to do. However we should also remember that we are also the bedrock of humanity and strive to end the suffering of the people worldwide for the survival of the future generation.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce an exceptional woman, my sister, my hero Madame Victoire Ingabire who left her lucrative career in the Netherlands and went to Rwanda with the aim of bringing true reconciliation and peace for her people. Under the dictatorial regime, she was intimidated and later on imprisoned for 15 years. My point here is that in a country with 67% women in parliament, they did nothing to support the cause of reconciliation and unity that Madame Ingabire was advancing which could have ended the humiliation that the Rwandan women are experience today. To me those women are just seat warmers and have no voice to defend the rights of the citizens that they are voted to represent. We have sisters who have aspired in leadership already and they need our support and our empowerment so that they can also empower us. Now that the National election are coming up in May, let all get out and call upon our friends and families to get out there and vote for our courageous sisters who are standing up for election. With that approach we now stand a chance to reach the 25% that we have been struggling to reach in the past years.

Thank you.