

President Kagame this Saturday opened the 16th edition of the National Leadership Retreat known as Umwiherero at the Rwanda Defence Force Combat Training Centre in Gabiro.

Taking place for the 16th time, Umwiherero 2019 coincides with the 25th commemoration of the genocide against the Tutsi. Two and a half decades later, Rwanda has made substantial progress in the economy, social and governance sectors.

The main themes focus on a sustainable transition to more secure livelihoods and an exit from poverty; strengthening efforts in human capital to improve outcomes in education and health care; driving upward economic growth through increased productivity in agriculture; and boosting exports, which are all continued interventions designed to push the country towards upper middle income status.

Speaking at the opening of the retreat, President Kagame called on senior leaders to ensure, with a sense of urgency, that the country moves forward swiftly towards its vision.

“The journey we are on and that we are determined to complete we cannot be taking one step forward and two steps backward. We have to keep moving forward, even if it means moving slowly and taking half a step at a time but we must only move forward. That is the mindset we should all have. Self-evaluation means that we have to do all we can to look for what was missing and rectify this failure. There are no two ways about it. You have to leave this retreat feeling a sense of urgency, to move faster towards our goal. Challenges, adversity, will force people to think smarter, harder so they survive and find solutions and sometimes even find an opportunity in that environment,” President Kagame said.

The Head of State further reiterated that Rwanda has had enough, extreme challenges for its leaders to learn lessons towards doing as much as they can – sometimes even attempting to do what is seemingly impossible – to deliver national economic transformation.

“I have learned lessons of our struggles, of the hardships of our country, one of them is I am not in control of what somebody else thinks about me or plans to do against me. But I must be in control of something, and that is what happens here in my country. You can attempt to destabilize our country, you can do us harm, there are many things people who wish you ill can do, you can shoot me with a gun and

kill me. But there is one thing that is impossible. No one can bring me to my knees. Men and women of my country, you should never accept that. You are much better than that," President Kagame added.

Attended by First Lady Jeannette Kagame, this year's Umwiherero runs from 09-12 March and brings together over 350 senior leaders from Central and Local Government, parastatals, and the private sector to discuss key drivers to propel Rwanda on a high and sustainable growth path. Umwiherero is an annual gathering where Rwandan leaders reflect on the country's progress and strategize on accelerating delivery of national priorities.