

Sudan and Rwanda have enjoyed strong diplomatic ties for many years, with Sudanese investors contributing significantly to Rwanda's development. That cooperation has steadily deepened across a range of sectors. Kigali and its outskirts are now home to a Sudanese community of around 6,000 people, whose presence is felt in trade, construction, education, hospitality and other key industries.

In this exclusive interview with Rwanda Dispatch's Steven Nsamaza, His Excellency Khalid Musa Dafalla, Sudan's Ambassador to Rwanda, speaks about the growing partnership between the two countries, the role Sudanese businesses are playing in Rwanda's economy and his vision for closer cooperation in the years ahead.

Here's an excerpt from the interview

How would you describe the current relationship between Sudan and Rwanda?

HE Khalid: The relationship between Sudan and Rwanda is deeply rooted in historical ties that date back to Africa's decolonization period. Sudan played a key role in supporting liberation movements across the continent, and even during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, it was among the first countries in the region to provide humanitarian assistance to Rwanda. Later, Rwanda reciprocated by contributing to peace efforts in Sudan in 2003, particularly through its peacekeeping mission in Darfur, where Rwandan troops earned high respect and trust from local communities.

These mutual acts of solidarity have strengthened the bond between our two nations and peoples. Over the years, our cooperation has expanded across political, diplomatic, and social fields. Sudan opened its embassy in 2011 and Rwanda opened in Khartoum in 2015, further institutionalizing our bilateral relations.

Today, our priority is to deepen these diplomatic and political ties at the highest level. There have been high-profile visits and exchanges between President Paul Kagame and General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, Chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council, reflecting a shared commitment to collaboration in economic, political, and regional matters.

What areas of cooperation are delivering tangible progress in recent years?

HE Khalid: Economically, trade has become a key area of progress. Since early this year, we have begun importing Rwandan tea and coffee directly, bypassing auction intermediaries. In just six months, the trade value exceeded four million dollars, making Sudan one of Rwanda's major buyers of these products. Conversely, Sudan is also exporting goods to Rwanda, strengthening two-way trade flows.

We have a growing Sudanese community of about 6,000 people in Rwanda, making it one of the largest African diaspora here. Interestingly, Sudanese students represent around 25 percent of all international students in Rwanda. This shows how academic and cultural exchange has become another pillar of our cooperation. A branch of a Sudanese university operates in Rwanda, and education remains a vital bridge between our nations.

Investment links are also growing. Sudanese investors have injected over \$20 million into Rwanda's economy, particularly in sectors like education, healthcare, construction, and infrastructure. Every day, more Sudanese professionals—engineers, doctors, and entrepreneurs—arrive to explore opportunities. They are drawn by Rwanda's political stability, business-friendly environment, and zero-tolerance on corruption.

What makes Rwanda such an attractive destination for the growing Sudanese community?

HE Khalid: First of all I want to extend my profound appreciation to the government of Rwanda for open doors to all Africans—specifically for Sudanese who are facing difficulty during this time of war. As you know, over 13 million Sudanese have been displaced, and 5 million have become refugees due to the war. Fortunately, the Sudanese when they are coming here they don't come as refugees but as students, businessmen, skilled workers, and investors. They feel at home here because of the safety, hospitality, and inclusiveness of Rwandan society.

The factors that make Rwanda particularly attractive, first is they feel at home, its exceptional security, ease of doing business, and clear investment policies. For instance, it takes only a few days to register a business, and the process is transparent and free of corruption. Importantly, Rwanda's strong commitment to Pan-Africanism creates a sense of belonging for Sudanese people here.

Sudanese investors are active across different sectors of Rwanda's economy. Which areas are attracting the most attention right now — and

why?

HE Khalid: Tangible progress has been achieved in the construction sector, considered to be among the most active. Currently, there are about six real estate Sudanese companies that are active in infrastructure, with projects worth millions of dollars. Agriculture is another area of growth, as investors take advantage of Rwanda's high-quality, organic tropical produce for export. We have seven or eight companies investing in agriculture for both local and export market because of Rwanda's advantage in agriculture.

There are also investments in financial services, education, pottery, and general trade. In manufacturing, a new glass-processing factory—the first of its kind in Rwanda—stands out as a symbol of growing industrial collaboration between the two countries.

Overall, Sudan and Rwanda enjoy a strong, multidimensional partnership — built on shared history, mutual respect, and a forward-looking vision of African cooperation.

How does the Sudanese diplomatic representation provide support to these initiatives?

HE Khalid: Before they come, they always call, directly or through their friends seeking advices, guidance. Because you know investment needs stability, stable policies and regulation, trust and credibility. So we give them assurances and encourage them to come to invest. On the student side, any family calls first to bring their daughters and boys, so we encourage them to come. So we are promoting Rwanda for more sudanese to come because this received advantage and secondly will also promote our bilateral relations, economy and cultural spheres.

Beyond trade and investment, how are Sudanese nationals integrating into Rwandan society — in education, culture, or everyday life?

HE Khalid: That's a very important question. I believe Sudanese nationals are integrating quite well into Rwandan society. We currently have around 6,000 Sudanese living in Rwanda, and more than half of them are students. The younger generation, in particular, is actively engaging with the community — many are even using social media to promote Rwanda as a great destination for foreigners.

Most Sudanese here are eager to learn from Rwanda's remarkable experience in social reconciliation, nation-building, and the rule of law. They see Rwanda as an inspiring model for Africa. We are all Africans; we share similar traditions, rhythms, and even music. The only real challenge is the language barrier, but many Sudanese are learning Kinyarwanda to better integrate. I was proud to see one Sudanese student recently win a national Rwandan football competition in high school — and another perform traditional Rwandan dance with excellence. These are small but powerful examples of cultural connection and mutual respect.

Of course, newcomers may face initial adaptation challenges, but within two or three months, they adjust and feel at home. Overall, Sudanese nationals deeply respect Rwandan traditions, history, and values — and we truly celebrate their growing integration into Rwandan society as brothers and sisters.

What role does the Sudanese Embassy play in promoting cultural exchange between the two countries?

The embassy plays an active role in strengthening cultural and academic ties between Sudan and Rwanda. Before the conflict in Sudan, many Rwandan students studied at Sudanese universities. Now, for the first time, we are seeing more Sudanese students and professionals coming to Rwanda — which is a very positive sign of mutual exchange.



We are currently focusing on three key areas. First, we are promoting academic partnerships between universities in both countries. In the near future, we expect to sign cooperation and twinning agreements between Sudanese and Rwandan higher learning institutions.

Second, we are encouraging student exchanges and scholarships. Our Africa International University, which hosts about 50,000 students from across the continent, has agreed to offer scholarships to Rwandan students starting next year.

In addition, we are exploring collaboration in areas such as genocide documentation and memorial preservation, learning from Rwanda's remarkable experience in using culture and history to promote unity and reconciliation.

On a regional level, how do Sudan and Rwanda collaborate within the African Union or other regional frameworks?

Sudan and Rwanda enjoy strong cooperation within the African Union and other regional and international forums. Both countries share a commitment to peace, stability, and African integration. We deeply appreciate Rwanda's leadership within the AU, particularly its role in advancing reform initiatives and promoting African-led solutions to continental challenges.

Together, we work to strengthen African unity and ensure that issues such as human rights are addressed constructively — not used as political tools against African nations. At the UN and other multilateral platforms, Sudan and Rwanda often coordinate positions on key continental priorities. Both nations believe in Africa's potential as the continent of the future, driven by its young population and shared vision for self-reliance and sustainable development.

What are some of the main challenges facing the Sudanese community in Rwanda today?

Most of the challenges we see are among students. Many of them come from conflict-affected areas in Sudan, so some arrive a bit traumatized and need time to adjust to a peaceful environment. Adapting socially and emotionally can be difficult at first, but with support from local institutions and the Rwandan government, these issues are usually managed well.

Another challenge is the language barrier. Many Sudanese students come from Arabic-speaking backgrounds and need time to adjust to Rwanda's English-based education system. However, most are making good progress and adapting gradually.

For other Sudanese like businesspeople and professionals — the main issues are administrative or immigration-related, though generally minor and handled efficiently with the help of Rwandan authorities. Overall, the Sudanese community feels well-supported, and the environment for business and study remains positive.

What is your assessment of the current situation in Sudan, and what efforts are being made toward peace and national reconciliation?

The fall of Al-Fashir as the historical capital of Darfur in late October 2025 by RSF reveals how far the brutality and atrocities committed by the militia against civilians including women and children. Its not just a mass killing, its an ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity that are well documented by the international community

and well reputable media outlets.

The regional power funding this war and paying for mercenaries that belong to 17 countries in Latin America and Africa wanted to apply Libyan scenario by dividing Sudan into two spheres and two governments. Sudanese people will continue fighting for their territorial integrity and national unity. We are open to the peace process that is based on Jeddah declaration. Furthermore, the Gov. of the Sudan welcomes the US administration efforts to put an end to this war and produce just peace that will hold those perpetrators accountable for their crimes and halt the external aggression against my country. There is no doubt that we will restore our dignity and unity of the country on the basis of last and durable peace by all means possible.

Rwanda in peace making, national unity and social reconciliation remains an inspiring African model that will give us hope and wisdom to follow accordingly to our own circumstances and social specification.



Looking ahead, what will be your main priorities as Ambassador to deepen bilateral relations between Sudan and Rwanda?

My main priority is to build on the already strong political and diplomatic relations between Sudan and Rwanda by expanding cooperation at the people-to-people level. Government-to-government ties are excellent, but we now need to strengthen direct engagement between our citizens — through greater movement of people, trade, and cultural and educational exchange. I want to see more partnerships between our business communities, universities, and cultural institutions. Sudanese and Rwandans share many common values and interests, and by deepening these human connections, we can further promote mutual prosperity and understanding between our two nations.

If you had to name one legacy you'd like to leave at the end of your term, what would it be?

Definitely, if I can leave one legacy, I think it would be for Rwanda to become a peace partner for Sudan — through its support, encouragement, and assistance in whatever is required to achieve peace in Sudan, based on Rwanda's historical achievements as a successful African model. I also want Rwanda to be an economic

partner and one of the top countries for cultural exchange and cooperation between our peoples.