

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Olivier Nduhungirehe, has called for a shift from aid-driven development to trade-based partnerships, warning that some donor countries use aid as a tool for political leverage.

“Achieving sustainable development requires moving beyond mere aid; we need cooperation that benefits all parties, not instruments of political influence,” Minister Nduhungirehe said.

The global economy remains divided, with many nations classified as developing or poor, while wealthy countries are few. In 2015, United Nations member states set the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030, replacing the Millennium Development Goals and promoting inclusive growth worldwide.

Speaking at the UN General Assembly on September 25, 2025, Minister Nduhungirehe emphasized Rwanda’s commitment to implementing all SDGs, highlighting technology, innovation, and inclusive development as key drivers of progress.

“Despite challenges like climate change and the digital divide, Rwanda has aligned its national plans with the SDGs,” he said. “Inequality in access to finance, technology, and markets continues to widen the gap between rich and poor nations.”

He added that international partnerships have historically helped countries advance, but stressed that development aid should not be used as a political tool.

“It is time to move from aid dependency to trade-based cooperation, which empowers developing countries through mutually beneficial partnerships,” he said. “Each country has sovereignty and should not be forced to choose between its security and development. Development aid should foster cooperation, not serve as a weapon to impose control.”

Minister Nduhungirehe’s remarks come amid reports that some European countries imposed economic sanctions on Rwanda, accusing it of supporting the M23 militia in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Rwanda has consistently denied involvement, stating that its actions are limited to defensive measures against the FDLR—a militia responsible for attacks linked to the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi.

In March 2025, Rwanda suspended diplomatic relations with Belgium, citing “unacceptable behavior” and bias regarding the DRC conflict. MINAFFET said Belgium has historically acted against Rwanda’s interests, including attempts to tarnish its image through manipulation and false narratives.

The ministry highlighted Belgium’s past role in sowing ethnic divisions that contributed to the 1994 genocide, and criticized its continued support for individuals promoting genocide denial and extremist ideology.

The decision to sever ties underscores Rwanda’s commitment to protecting national interests, sovereignty, and dignity, while maintaining peace and respect for independent nations. Belgian diplomats were given 48 hours to leave Rwanda, in accordance with the Vienna Convention.

By voicing these concerns at the UN General Assembly, Rwanda reaffirmed its stance that development partnerships must be based on trade and cooperation rather than political coercion. Minister Nduhungirehe urged the international community to ensure aid supports progress and mutual benefit, not political agendas that undermine national sovereignty.