

Rwanda satisfied with pledges of international help on reconstruction

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GENEVA, Switzerland, Jan 19 (AFP) - The Rwanda government expressed satisfaction Thursday with international pledges to finance Rwandan economic reconstruction and promote gradual return of refugees to a country devastated by ethnic bloodletting last year.

"We think the amount of 764 million dollars requested for 1995 can be reached", Rwandan prime minister Faustin Twagiramungu told correspondents in Geneva after a two-day round-table in the Swiss city organized by the United Nations Development Program.

Insisting on the need for national reconciliation, the premier recalled what he called genocide in Rwanda by Hutu extremists in power, bringing the deaths of half a million to a million people followed by the exodus of two million refugees.

"The apocalypse we went through is no different from the Holocaust in Europe", the prime minister said.

He estimated that aid pledges so far from a score of countries and financial institutions totaled 500 million to 600 million dollars. His government, he added, had calmed the "understandable fears" of donors, particularly by announcing coordination of the various projects with the UN Development Program.

He said the "program for national reconciliation and rehabilitation and for socio-economic stimulus" included such priorities as resettling refugees, improving the balance of payments, reorganizing the state services despite a shortage of skilled staff, repairing infrastructures, and stimulating production.

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