

Embassy of Burundi , 16:45 13-9-00 +02, Pres Buyoya speaks on the Arus

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Subject: Pres Buyoya speaks on the Arusha Agreement

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Burundi Peace Agreement - President Buyoya speaks on Radio France International (RFI)

Bujumbura, 5 September.

The Burundian Head of State spoke on the subject of the Arusha Agreement on RFI on Monday. Below is the full transcription of what he said.

Jean-Philippe Remy: Mr President,

Good morning, you are currently in the news for having signed a peace agreement for BURUNDI at ARUSHA, but there is a sense that this peace agreement was signed rather hurriedly, under pressure. Does it not seem to you that the conditions under which the agreement was signed, especially in terms of time constraints, raise some questions about the agreement?

Pierre BUYOYA: Firstly, this agreement is the product of two years of negotiations. The signing of the agreement, it is true, was done with a certain degree of haste. This explains why some were hesitant about signing it, some signed subject to reservations, but you know a negotiation process is influenced by many factors. There is that of the negotiators, there is that of the mediation, and that of the international environment.

J.P.R.: The other sensitive issue with regard to MANDELA's method is his comparison of the white minority in South Africa under Apartheid, on the one hand, with the Tutsi minority, on the other. Was this comparison problematic for you; has it represented an obstacle in the negotiations up to now?

Pierre BUYOYA: You know, when a national issue falls into the hands of international players, sometimes distortions occur. Comparisons are drawn which may be harmful, and which do not fall within the normal context of these issues. I believe, in effect, that to base political solutions on the concept of ethnic majorities or minorities is quite dangerous in the context of Africa's ethnic complexity.

J.P.R.: The ethnic question is, indeed, rather complex since we have seen at Arusha how your fiercest opponents were found to be among the Tutsis. Does this indicate that a problem exists among the Tutsis; is this a bad sign for Burundi; are we going to see confrontation between Tutsis?

Pierre BUYOYA: For my part, I do not have the sense that we are moving towards confrontation. It is true that there are differences; even strong divergences on certain points, but I believe that the experience of debating and negotiating has resulted in the perspectives of ethnic communities drawing much closer together; the points of view of different components in each ethnic community have also drawn closer together. I do not have the impression that we are moving towards confrontation, quite the

contrary.

J.P.R.: Nonetheless there continues to be confrontation with the Hutu rebellion; we know that the rebellion enjoys the support of countries in the region. Will it be necessary, in order to reach a cease fire agreement, to call for the intervention of neighbouring countries?

Pierre BUYOYA: In the agreement that we have signed, the countries of the region have given certain undertakings. We will soon see whether these undertakings will be translated into action.

I cannot say, therefore, that we have guarantees, today, that things will go as planned; there is as yet no guarantee of that.

J.P.R.: And if the countries in the sub-region do not stand by their undertakings, what will happen?

Pierre BUYOYA: If the countries in the region do not stand by their undertakings, we Burundians will continue to search for peace among ourselves. If the rebellion is ready to negotiate with us, we will negotiate directly with them. If they refuse to do so and wish to sabotage the agreement which has been signed by the rest of the Burundians, I believe that these Burundians will organise themselves to say no to this.

J.P.R.: So that means that the war will continue. Could it continue in all the sanctuaries of the rebellion, including those outside the country?

Pierre BUYOYA: Yes, but if war is forced upon you, you have no other choice but to fight it.

J.P.R.: Fight it where, even outside the country? The Arusha peace agreement is not enough

Pierre BUYOYA: These are not matters which are determined in advance; war is fought under the conditions of the moment, after careful assessment of each step that is taken.

J.P.R.: We are somewhat confused when we hear the commentaries on the content of the agreement because we do not exactly when the transition will begin. Will the transition commence on the day that the cease-fire agreement is reached; or are there additional conditions to be met before this period is initiated, and, above all, when will we know exactly who will be heading this period?

Pierre BUYOYA: Well, there is an article in the peace agreement that says that the parties have one month to clarify all the questions that are not clarified at the time of the signing of the agreement. We will therefore be working relentlessly to clarify all these questions within this timeframe.

J.P.R.: So you are promising us that before 28 September there will be a public announcement about the transition, who will lead it and its duration, etc.

Pierre BUYOYA: We are in a process of negotiation; I am not alone in determining these factors. What I can tell you with absolute certainty is that we will start discussing them very soon.