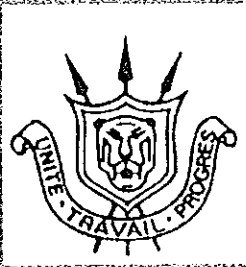


REPUBLIQUE COGORDONNÉE



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

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MEMORENDUM OF HIS EXCELLENCY PIERRE NKURUNZIZA, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI, ON THE CURRENT SITUATION IN BURUNDI

13TH EXTRAORDINARY SUMMIT OF HEADS OF STATE

DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA

13th May 2015

1. Burundi has recently been the scene of violent demonstrations. The demonstrations were not triggered by the nomination by the CNDD-FDD Party of their presidential candidate for the forthcoming elections. The stark reality is that these demonstrations started well before the submission of the candidacy, which was deemed by a certain opinion, contrary to the Constitution of the Republic of Burundi and the Arusha Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Burundi.
2. In terms of casualties and material damage, the following should be reported:
 - 17 people killed, including defense and security forces, Cnodd-Fdd members and demonstrators
 - 20 vehicles set ablaze
 - 15 vehicles vandalized
 - 126 police personnel injured
 - 3 houses set ablaze, all belonging to defense and security personnel
 - 4 offices of Cnodd-Fdd set ablaze
 - 910 arrested, of whom 600 mostly under 18 years set free
 - Schools in insurgency areas closed
3. The Government of Burundi is not taking lightly the concerns expressed here and there by both Burundians and our Partners, especially those pertaining to peace and security, and the appeals for respect of the Constitution and the Arusha Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Burundi, in order to hold free, fair, inclusive and peaceful elections.
4. The Constitution of Burundi derives from the Arusha Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation which was signed on 28th august 2000, and the Global Ceasefire Agreement which was signed on the 16th November 2003. It also takes inspiration from the National Unity Charter celebrated yearly on the 5th of February. I am totally committed to that Constitution.
5. There was persistent confusion around Articles 96 and 302 of the Constitution, prompting a heated debate, contradictory interpretations, and even speculations leading some protagonists to argue that 2015 general elections in Burundi should be postponed.

6. The Arusha Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation which was signed by seventeen (17) Political Parties and the Government comprises reservations by ten (10) signatory parties. Those reservations are part and parcel of the Arusha Agreement, especially among others, the mode of election of the President of the Republic and the Transition Period.
7. The Government resulting from the 2005 and 2010 general elections has demonstrated strong will, commitment and resolves to implement the letter and spirit of the Arusha Agreement. It should be stressed that the Arusha Agreement was sharply improved by the Global Ceasefire Agreement, which was signed in 2003, between the Transitional Government and CNDD-FDD as a Combating Movement at that time.
8. At this juncture, it is important to highlight that the Global Ceasefire Agreement was signed without reservations. This has caused some provisions of the Arusha Agreement to be taken up by events. Today, the two Agreements are an integral part of the Constitution, and have equal treatment and consideration.
9. I firmly believe that elections are the only way to accommodate, take note and above all, abide to the verdict of the People. The International Community, which was deeply involved in the negotiations that allowed Burundians to recover peace and restore democracy, shall support the will of the People by supporting the elected Government in conducting successful elections scheduled from May to August this year.
10. It is very important that the International Community and the Partners, both local and international, understand and recognize that the Constitutional Court is the sole organ entrusted with the mandate to rule on matters pertaining to the interpretation of the Constitution, which Burundians have placed above the other laws and agreements.
11. The Court has made a ruling stating that the renewal of the current presidential term by direct universal suffrage is not contrary to the Constitution of the Republic of Burundi of 18 March 2005. As the decision of the Constitutional Court cannot be appealed, we have got to take act of the ruling in its entirety, and I am personally committed to respect it.
12. It should be reminded that every time our country is heading to elections, there have always been rumours and lies in the country calling for people to flee an imminent crisis. These rumours have always been proved to be baseless and unfounded, because no crisis has unfolded as a result. This happened in 1993, prior to the elections, in 2005 and in 2010, again prior to the elections. The same rumours have been spreading like bushfire this time around, and the result is known to you all.

13. Furthermore, it should be stressed that more than one million people fled to Tanzania in 1993 as a result of the civil war that broke out afterwards, following the assassination of the first democratically elected president, Melchior Ndadaye.
14. I wish to recall that the National Independent Electoral Commission has so far received 8 candidacy papers. One cannot file for a candidacy without believing in election.
15. Paradoxically, some of those who submitted their candidacy are still calling for street protests. They are backed by some pseudo political parties which do not have militants on the ground, but who are clever enough to force a transition in order to reap what they have not sown.
16. Who should take the blame for what is happening in Burundi? The answer is simple: some opposition politicians whose electorate is close to zero, and whose only tool are private media they control, wrongly criticizing the Government from the studios in Bujumbura, without making any effort to meet their people in the countryside. They only wake up when the next election looms.
They should be reminded that preparing for the next election starts when the previous one ends.
17. Despite what is aired through the media, the situation in Burundi is really conducive for elections. No one should be afraid. I recently called upon party leaders to mobilize their members in local communities in view of the forthcoming elections instead of resorting to street and violence.
18. Security in Burundi is indeed generally good because 99% of our territory is peaceful; because out of 18 districts or provinces, 16 are peaceful; out of 119 communes, 116 are peaceful; out of 3002 smallest administrative entities known as 'Collines', only 5 have gone to the streets.
19. Demonstrations have been reported mainly in the capital Bujumbura, but even there, statistics show that less than 20% of the city has been affected.
20. There are signs of good omen that violence will shortly come to an end. Our people are there to be served to uplift their standards of living. We cannot keep using the population, particularly children, as human shields in acts of violence. School children, pupils and students, all have to return to school since their place is not in the streets.

21. I also call upon political party leaders to sensitize their voters to abide with law and order, and participate massively in the forthcoming elections. Indeed, no solution, other than the elections, is sustainable for the current situation.
22. I would like to reiterate to all stakeholders involved in the forthcoming elections that necessary measures have been taken to ensure that the electoral process is free, fair and peaceful. I wish to emphasize and reassure, once again, the National and International Community that the electoral process will be transparent, inclusive and peaceful. I am committed to this.
23. I once again call upon the International Community, the UN, the European Union, the African Union, the East African Community, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Region, all the regional groupings, to support us in this undertaking. We shall all respect the will of the People expressed through the ballot box.
24. Burundi has 46 legally registered political parties, but only twelve of them are involved in the upcoming elections due to take place between May and August 2015. This has always been like this for a very long time.
25. There is a large variety of political parties but only a few participate in elections. However, those with no popular support, with no political presence on the ground, are the ones making a lot of noise and peddling lies.
26. These are some of the excuses, shenanigans and tricks often used by Burundian opposition parties to deceive whoever they can, and which sufficiently validate their all-time opposition against elections as the right form to access to power.
27. In 2010, following their defeat in local elections, opposition parties withdrew from subsequent elections citing electoral fraud which they have never been able to prove, as all observers at both ends of the spectrum declared the 2010 elections credible and up to international standards. Among them was the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, who visited Burundi just days after the municipal elections.
28. Following the undemocratic move to withdraw from the 2010 electoral process, opposition parties repeatedly undermined the country's security by resorting to violence and terror. Different ruling party offices were set ablaze across the country and grenades were thrown into public venues, most of the time targeting members of the ruling party, etc. Furthermore, some of the above mentioned opposition leaders and their members were cited by various UN experts' reports as part of regional negative forces, especially in the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

These attitudes prove that these parties were never prepared to rule the country through the ballot box but by weapons.

29. With the help of private media, the opposition is in a stinging attack against the ruling party in general, and against its youth wing "Imbonerakure" in particular. The campaign to demonize and slander the ruling party has no other aim than cutting the ruling party off its most important part of electorate, namely the youth.
30. Burundian opposition is no stranger to contradictions and controversy. Without being exhaustive, here are some illustrations:
 - A. Through different letters and media interviews, some political actors and leaders of opposition political parties have demonstrated since 2013 that they were not preparing for elections in 2015.
 - B. During voter registration, opposition leaders have blown hot and cold in urging their supporters not to register to vote but later soundly requested an extension of the registration period for their supporters to register, when they realized that the electoral process was going on normally.
 - C. When the Government of Burundi proposed the use of national biometric identity card in 2012, the opposition stood against it and described it as a tool to plan an unprecedented rigging of the upcoming electoral season. Surprisingly, with 6 months prior to the elections, the same opposition parties demanded insistently that the biometric identity card be introduced!
 - D. Several efforts have been made to explain that the country was not able to go to elections with the biometric ID card and that the normal one should be used as before. The same card was indeed used in the 1993, 2005 and 2010 elections.

What could push the Burundian politicians to impose a technological solution that is not within the reach of the Government of Burundi immediately? Just because some these parties do not want these elections to take place. After seeking expert view from some computer scientists and UNDP, these politicians and activists from civil society have come to their senses.

- E. As if that was not enough, some politicians and some members of the civil society have claimed that fake identity cards were used during voter registration, but they failed to come up with evidence to support these allegations. Several meetings were held to give them the opportunity to substantiate their claims but they failed, as was the case in 2010. This appeared once again to be one of their delaying tactics to push back or reject the elections.

However, some voices have been raised that elections should be postponed, or cancelled, just because a handful of people are on the streets, especially the youth, under the influence of drugs, taking hostage residents of Bujumbura neighborhoods and preventing them from going about their normal activities, to earn a living.

35. Allow me to recall that even in Nigeria, where a significant portion of the North is in the grip of Boko Haram terrorists, elections were held. Even in Mali. Compared to these countries, what is happening in Burundi cannot prevent the electoral process from taking place.
36. When we organized the first election in 2005, the FNL of Agathon Rwasa was still out of the peace process because it had not yet signed a peace deal with the Government. Yet, elections were held in a peaceful atmosphere, despite the fact the FNL were staging sporadic attacks in some parts of the country.
37. The Government of Burundi is obviously concerned about the flow of refugees who crossed the border, some of them because of rumors spread by malicious people. I am launching a heartfelt appeal to them to return to their homes. About five thousand have already returned and they have found their properties intact. I encourage others to come back as well; the Government will do everything in its power to protect them, so that they can participate in these elections.
38. As I wrap up, what is said about the youth affiliated to political parties in Burundi, either through local and foreign media, is worrying. I am convinced that there are no militias in Burundi. Since 2009, I personally launched a disarmament campaign. To date, as a result, over 100,000 weapons that were illegally held by civilians have been collected. This campaign must continue. I am calling for the support of our partners to ensure the disarmament campaign is strengthened.
39. To conclude these remarks, allow me to thank, from the bottom of my heart all those who, in one way or another, continue to support Burundi. My thanks also go to the organizers of this Summit, which I hope will generate constructive advice on the way forward that would improve the socio-political climate in Burundi.