



# Identity and Cultural Diversity in Conflict Resolution and Democratisation for the African Renaissance: The Case of Burundi

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## **Abstract**

Since its independence in 1962, Burundi has witnessed conflicts and violence. A multitude of factors help explain these tragedies, which include the creation of a negative image of the ‘other’; an ever-strengthened fear of the ‘other’; the blood feud between the Hutus and the Tutsis; and an illusion of the dominance of a so-called ‘ethnic group’.

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The purpose of this paper is to underscore the part which the colonial state played with regard to the creation and instrumentalisation of ethnicity, based on racist ideologies. Since independence, the ruling elites continue to appropriate and radicalise this category. As result, they are not only able to enjoy political gains, but also simply perpetuate ethnicity with the help of an institutional framework, while pretending to fight it.

The Burundi nation that was built on moral and social values such as *Ubushingantahe*, *Ubuntu*, *Ubupfasoni*, a love for a work well done, and the value of effort, finds itself in a trap. There is a crisis of these values, which resulted in the legitimatisation of negative forces as criteria for social promotion and access to power.

The paper argues that because the Burundi issue is complex and multi-form, the solution has to be complex and multiform as well. To this effect and to be able to make an impact, it has to draw from many registers: political, institutional and cultural (the value of unity and the institution of *Ubushingantahe* philosophy).

The paper proposes a few political initiatives which are to be taken: advocacy on citizenry, participation in the culture of democracy, memory restitution through history, and depolitisation and demystification of ethnicity. From a socio-cultural perspective, the initiatives will be based on deepening dialogue and negotiation at all levels, rehabilitating the social and cultural values and customs likely to enhance social cohesion and peace, promoting rehabilitation of the *bashingantahe* institution in order to incorporate peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms and human rights into the educational system, designing an integrated national reconciliation programme, providing support to the cultural organisations which promote peace and human rights, and advocating for media involvement in all the above initiatives.

## **Introduction**

Since its independence in 1962, Burundi has witnessed conflicts and violence with political assassinations and massacres of the population. This study analyses the nature and the cause of conflicts, the role of cultural diversity in conflict resolution and of identity in democracy. We are very convinced that resolution will not be easy because a multitude of factors helped transform this myth into reality. Here, we are talking about globalisation, discrimination, the exclusion of an entire ethnic group, the creation of a negative image of the 'other', an ever-strengthened fear of the other, the blood feud between the Hutus and the Tutsis, and an illusion of the dominance of a so-called ethnic group. In all this, and to agree with René Lemarchand (2002:19), nothing is more dangerous than what is left unsaid or, still worse, what is denied. The two 'can only fuel hatred born of a warped, ethnicised memory, which puts the good people on one side and the bad on the other'.

In Burundi, just like elsewhere in some other societies, there is no community that can honestly say that it is perfectly innocent. What empirical facts reveal to us is that the elites of both communities have their portion of guilt in the conflicts that are tearing Burundian society apart today. So, for our analysis, after presenting some general theory and methodology concepts, we are going to focus our paper on five major areas: political power and democracy; mobilisation and politicisation of identities in the Burundian conflict; the limitations of attempted solutions; identity and cultural diversity in Burundi; and the role of culture in conflict resolution.

In conclusion, we are going to reiterate the importance of some measures to be implemented that are based on the promotion of peace and national reconciliation within the framework of the African renaissance.

## Theoretical and methodological framework

We have to mention early on that identity, be it ethnic or otherwise, is a complex social phenomenon and just like all social phenomena, it undergoes multiple mutations. And here, we have to agree with Nnoli Okwudiba (1989:2) that ethnicity ‘can change its form, place or role in society during the existence of that given society. Its content can enrich other new elements. Its limitations vis-à-vis other social phenomena may be modified and in doing so, be subject to other new questions’. For that reason, we agree with the author that ethnicity in its purest and isolated form does not exist. It is always associated with political, economic and social issues that make up its essential components.

Jean Loup Amselle (1985:11) was not far from this theory when he said that ‘ethnic phenomena are linked to certain historical phases during which political stakeholders and social categories and classes feel compelled to express their ambitions, anger or frustrations in a tribal, ethnic or regional language’. That is similar to what was said by Philippe Poutignat and Jocelyne Streiff-Fenart (1995:147) when they wrote that ‘ethnicity is a social structure of belonging, determined and manipulated by the stakeholders according to a given situation’. The same authors go on to show that ethnic identity can transform itself into a conscious and organised political strategy.

This dynamic and useful characteristic of nature has been well documented by Frederick Barth (1969:11). For this writer, ‘ethnic identity, just like other collective or individual identities, is formed and transformed in the interaction of social groups by the processes of inclusion or exclusion that establish the limits between these groups and determine the rules’. Barth (1969:11) concludes that in these processes, ‘the qualities that are taken into account are not the crystallisation of the various objectives but only those that the stakeholders themselves consider to be significant’.

Given that the same differentials can change in importance or lose their efficiency in the course of history, we can admit that ethnicity is not everlasting. It is not an unchanging bloc of beliefs, values, codes and behaviour. It is the product of relations between one given group and the other within a social organisation. For the case of Burundi in particular, the fact that identity alliances keep changing and allegiances keep shifting according to the situations confirms our assertion. Identity frontiers and traits have highlighted that the aims of dichotomisation and stigmatisation are modified according to circumstances and their degree of political and economic usefulness.

While taking into account these empirical facts and current opinion on identity conflicts, our approach will take us through a theoretical discussion based on existing literature as well as the realities on the ground. It is necessary, as Léopold Nana (2005:20) has said, to use experience and reflection to stop and look back.

### **Political power, identity and democracy in Burundi**

Traditionally, as well said by Ntahombaye (2005:46), ‘Burundi is a real nation-state where the social groups (*Baganwa, a more hierarchical group, and the Bahutu, Batutsi and Batwa as ethnic groups*) live in the same territory, speak the same language (Kirundi), share the same culture and are governed by the same socio-political organisation headed by the supreme authority, the king (the *Mwami*)’.

Royal authority had united all Burundians under the same allegiance, that to the *Mwami*. They all had the same priorities and believed in the same god. There was order in the society with a strong and hierarchical state structure. Burundians had a clear sense of a monarchical state. Supreme power was wielded and exercised by the *Mwami*, the holder of an institution: the crown, symbol of the unity of Burundians, and of durability and spiritual strength, as is proven by the rites performed when a king is appointed.

The hierarchical organisation was based on an administrative structure with several levels of authority, that is the *Baganwa* (princes), the *Banyamabanga* (custodians of rituals at the royal palace), the *Batware* (sub-chiefs), the *Ivyariho* (delegated leaders), and the *bashingantahe* (elders). These institutions formed a cohesive unit which integrated and transcended them and within which they all played a certain role. The princes were a separate social group around which existed a rivalry within the Hutu and Tutsi lineage. This rivalry was based on its specialisation in economic and social duties and not on ethnic identity. The society did not in any way reflect the feudal structure that was created by the colonial masters. There were no masters, no serfs; all were under the authority of one sacred king.

The current prominence of identities was created for political purposes. Started by the colonial masters and continued by the post-colonial government, ethnicity has become a profitable mobilising tool. Politicians use it to conquer or retain power. This process of transforming ethnic groups into instruments was accompanied by all kinds of divisive phenomena, manipulation, fear of the other, fabrication of perceptions, clichés and stereotypes. These phenomena were aggravated by a crisis of values. The socio-cultural dimension will be developed in the second part of the study.

### **The nature and the main cause of the Burundian conflict: general overview**

Several studies such as the one done in 1998 by a team of researchers of the University of Burundi within the framework of a vast research coordinated by Professor Adebayo Adedeji, Executive Director of the Centre of Development and Strategic Studies (ACDESS), on countries that are currently witnessing conflicts, show that the causes of the crisis that Burundi has been engulfed in since 1993 were multi-dimensional: ideological, socio-cultural (degradation of values), psychological (suspicion, fear), political (fight for power) and

economic (unequal access to economic and social opportunities with regard to education, employment and health).

Other studies, such as the National Report on Durable Human Development (Rapport sur le Développement Humain 2005), have identified the traditional explanations: the evolutionary approach based on ethnocentricity, the maverick approach where intellectuals try to shy away from their responsibilities by explaining that the crisis of traditional values and politico-ethnic conflicts was first and foremost due to colonialism, the influence and the hold of the strong regional powers and trans-border networks as well as the development paradigm that uses poverty as the basis of its argument.

The Arusha Accord (2000: Preamble, Protocol 1), signed by various political parties after several negotiations, took the political dimension seriously. It stipulated that the conflict was mainly political, with extremely important ethnic dimensions. It sprang from a fight by the political class to acquire or retain power. In addition to these ethnic divisions, there were other aspects like regionalism, clanism and clientelism.

The Arusha Accord also recognised the inculcation of a racist, caricatured and divisive vision of the Burundian society by colonial power, accompanied by prejudices and clichés, the manipulation of discriminatory practises, and the destruction of certain values that had until then been a factor of unity and national cohesion.

### **Political elites and politicisation of social antagonisms**

From the anthropological and historical point of view, the groups making up the Burundian society are the same ethnic group. An ethnic group has a name, customs, values and usually its own language. The ethnic totality is made up of a mosaic of lineages. The terms 'ethnic group' and 'tribe' are therefore out of place when used in Burundi to designate the various sections of the population. The *Bahutu* and the *Batutsi* especially live together, spread over the entire region and have warm relations with intermarriage, exchange of gifts, sharing of the drinking

straw (*gusangiran umukenke*) when beer is consumed, and mutual help in agricultural work (*ikibiri*).

Based on these facts, Ntahombaye (2005:51-52) rightly concludes that ‘nothing defines or justifies the existence of ethnicity in Burundi. The Baganwa, the Bahutu, the Batutsi and the Batwa are not casts, social classes, ethnic groups or tribes’. He clearly showed the damaging role of the colonial government in creating and manipulating ethnic groups on the basis of racist ideologies and ethnic distinctions derived from colonial and missionary history. The rifts thus created were conserved and nurtured in the mindsets of the people. After independence, the local political elite identified themselves with these structures and perpetuated them in industry and daily life. Here, we quote especially Jean-Loup Amselle who stipulates that ‘the invention of ethnic groups is the joint effort of the colonial administration, professional ethnologists and those who combined the two roles’. Lothaire Niyonkuru (1997:111) agrees with this view when he admitted that ‘Bantu-Hamitic ideology is the result of a (neo-)colonial creation destined to facilitate or maintain foreign dominion in the region between the East African lakes’.

The racial interpretation of Burundian society was indeed put into practice. Under the policy of indirect rule and efficiency, Jean-Pierre Chrétien (Chrétien & Mukuri 2002:73) points out that ‘the Tutsi masters’ were involved in administration to help the Europeans make the ‘Hutu serfs’ work. Thus, ‘able, adult men’, mainly Hutus, were isolated due to colonial constraints applied by the sub-chiefs who were increasingly being drawn from the Tutsi. This makes it clear to us that the Burundian politico-social system fell in the category of the model that Jean-Jérôme Maquet called ‘the premise of inequality’ in 1954 when he spoke about ancient Rwanda.

Currently, in Burundi, just like in other African nation-states where politics is likened to a milking cow, an appointment to a political position is likened to the securing of something to eat or a place where one can stay forever (*yampaye ukurya no kuryama*) whereas in the past, positions of



authority were considered to be as heavy as stones (*amabanga aremera nk'amabuye*). Each case of competition for already scarce resources could be used as an opportunity to let the masses sing to the tune of ethnicity. In a conflict over legitimacy, the strategy of the opposing parties in 1993 to mobilise ethnicity to auto-legitimise oneself and de-legitimise the opposing party corroborates this thesis statement.

UPRONA<sup>1</sup> for example wanted to be the rightful leaders due to their historical actions, their 'noble' institutions and the '*causa nostra*' objective of protecting the unity of the Burundian people, which made it very different from FRODEBU<sup>2</sup>. This party also expected to benefit from their ethnic practices and their demands that were often denounced on the part of the opponent. FRODEBU, on the other hand, wanted to get its legitimacy mainly from its solid ethnic base, hits and ethnic violence that had characterised the UPRONA regime, and from the necessity for change. An analysis of the socio-political landscape in Burundi reveals that the last few years have been characterised by a major meltdown of the social fabric. The social and political problems are now manifested in the identity issue.

The impression of national unity seems to promote identity as a basis for the renewal of the legitimacy of competing elites. In any case, the difficult and accelerated political mutation casts a fresh questioning glance on the issue of identity and its relation to political power and democracy in Burundi. The pre-colonial history of this country shows us a Nation with all the known characteristics of the territory – a people united by the same history, the same culture and the same destiny.

Bududira (1995:591) accuses the political elite of adopting these manipulated structures and being responsible for the current disintegration and radicalisation of ethnic belonging.

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1 The Union for National Progress, a political party in Burundi.

2 Front for Democracy in Burundi.

The sharpening of belonging and ethnic sentiments is a modern development. The proof of this is that there has never been an ethnic war before and even during colonialism. In traditional Burundi, ethnic groups existed, but they did not have the identity component and the exaggerated social importance that they have acquired since 1956. They did not play the role that is reserved for them in Burundian society now, that of being tools that can easily be manipulated for all sorts of objectives: conquering power, expropriating neighbours goods, killing etc.

The youth also accuse the political class of being responsible for these manipulations. This testimony by Céline Manceau Rabarijaona, a young rebel in the militia, is very revealing:

In my mind I could see that we are moving into a real conflict between Hutu and Tutsi. We want to fight to defend ourselves and defend our ethnic groups. Afterwards I understood that all of us we were lost. Our opponents believed that they were defending their ethnic groups. We on our part were thinking the same thing. But that is not what it was. It was the politicians who were using and manipulating us. It was in 2000 that I understood that there was no bad ethnic group; rather there was a bad policy (Rabarijaona 2006:16).

According to theorists on rational choice, ethnic groups are created when individuals want to acquire benefits (riches and power) that they cannot obtain by using individual strategy. The Burundian conflict falls within this category.

Thus, political conflicts bring about a lasting obsession with identity, and leave behind wounds in the memory, remnants of reciprocal fear and a state of intractable conflict. In such an atmosphere, the individual retreats behind identities and neighbourhood rivalries with the hidden agenda of living off another person's wealth. A proverb which we do not recommend illustrates this fact '*Umugabo ni uwurya utwiwe n'utwabandi?*' (A made man is one who enjoys his property as well as that of others).

From these illustrations, we can already state that if identity is a system of subjective images of oneself, submitted to the approval of the other, it is also a system of rifts and disruptions – a creative system indeed.

In summary, it should be said that in Burundi, political ethnicity manifests itself in economic interests and political strategy, which provokes radical ethnic-based moves. A reciprocal, nurtured fear has become a permanent feature by creating a big psychological distance and an ethnic hatred that social contact should have eliminated. Society should have had the courage to face the truth and put a stop to the ethnic tug of war which characterises the days of independence, especially the national reconciliation period of the 1990s. Discrimination was apparently replaced by democracy, but a precondition was disregarded: the political neutralising of forces of excluding and killing, and of claiming mastership of the values on which democracy is generally built.

### **Mobilisation of identities in a situation of competition for the exercise of power**

Certainly, the political culture developed by the post-colonial Burundian state has always been characterised by a denial of the ethnic issue. Yet, as Patrice Yengo (1997:209) points out, ‘ethnicity is the screen on which are projected the contradictions of political society which, once resolved, make them seem void of meaning, for it is ethnicity which attributes meaning to policies that lack it’. The same author (Yengo 1997:210) adds that ‘the origin of ethnic strife is not in the ethnic group itself but in fights between political factions for the acquisition of state power’.

In this regard, we can admit that all identities can be a legitimate political resource if the ideology or identity does not create ghettos and does not look for external scapegoats outside the group; or if it does not justify a rejection of the other by an obsession with purity or if it does not consider any individual who refuses to toe the line as a traitor.

On this issue, the electoral campaign of June 1992 in Burundi was especially characterised by the renewal of terms of reference about identity.

Speeches for recruiting and mobilisation of militants, based mainly on painting opponents as beasts, had profound effects on the tragic events of 1993. Ethnicity became a tool for mobilisation for concrete resources and was accompanied by a discourse that promoted bitterness, which was conveniently used to fuel the confrontational politics. The effectiveness of this discourse was in creating bonds that hid the specific interests for which that battle was really being waged.

Since 1993, we have been witnessing in the Burundian political class, nonchalant attitudes, radicalisation of politicians' behaviour, helplessness or wariness of others in situations that call for initiative. This situation reveals the importance of ideologies, constructivist strategies, divergent interests and clashing needs. These crises therefore implicate these strategic choices that prey on fear, paranoia and the misery of the masses that are being dragged along.

The promotion of the ethnic factor is therefore a strategic attitude which is not necessarily adopted against the state; rather the state is just the main actor and the playing field.

The agenda of domination and the identity may be confused because they both aim to change collective conscience and the way controlled populations react to power. This is the case for rebel Hutus who manifest the high political consciousness of a group that is trying to reverse domination. Their actions are based on feelings of discrimination and inequality. The leaders of these movements should rather try to solve uneven distribution of resources and power between 'a privileged central group' and 'penalised peripheral groups'.

It is basically in this context that identity became a vector for emotional mobilisation, using certain approaches as signs and emblems of differences. These interactions created a kind of political sub-state. In this situation, one may ask the question whether ethnicity in Burundi is a challenge to be overcome or a political instrument to be legitimised and strengthened. There are two sides to this question. To the masses, victims of political overexploitation, ethnicity has to be defeated. It is rejected on

account of the evils that it has caused. It is a source of violence that has to be eradicated. On the other hand, for the stakeholder who sees only the immediate benefits brought about, ethnicity forms a weapon that can be enlisted and relied upon. It is a joint undertaking of the first rate that can be promoted for the advantages that it brings with it.

Effectively, this means that a study of the phenomenon of modernism in Burundi needs to be approached from the angle of 'identity problems' coupled with 'democratic stakes'. In light of this statement, it has to be understood that the democratisation of institutions in this country comes with many uncertainties. It aggregates a conflict caused by economic interests, social frustrations and political ambitions that provoke radical ethnic ventures. Tribalism has become a political weapon. It is used for ideological manipulation linked to hegemonic scheming, and it enables the exploiters to perform as political leaders.

We agree with Padover (1967:24) that 'the departure point of democratic life is the recognition of human dignity. That sets a certain way of life in a society based on mutual respect'. Democracy cannot exist in a society where this sine qua non is non-existent. In this area, the Burundian political elite still has a long way to go. All the attempts to protect human rights and to ensure the viability of democracy have proven to be fruitless.

### **Attempts at solutions, their limits and way forward**

#### **Attempts at a solution**

Very recently, the Arusha Accord for Peace and Reconciliation in Burundi, signed on 28 August 2000, only confirmed the recognition of ethnic groups 'represented' by families commonly known as G10 (group of 10 political parties representing Tutsi community) and G7 (group of 7 political parties representing Hutu community). Similarly, discussions started in April 2004 between political leaders with the aim of

putting into practice chapter III of the Accord, on democracy and good governance, followed the same pattern.

While pro-Hutu parties called for universal suffrage which would help them play the ethnic identity card so that the demographic majority should become the political majority, the pro-Tutsi parties proposed a distribution of posts based on ethnicity with 40% for Tutsis and 60% for Hutus. This quota system would definitely ensure that the Tutsi political elite never lose power. On both sides' agendas, the institutionalisation of identity or the 'identitisation' of institutions was evident. This 'turf war' is not fought on the base of political affinities. It is motivated by a dynamic combination of factors: a search for hegemony, personal needs, 'politics of the stomach', and the need to redistribute power within the political class and the security system. It is the strategy of hiding behind identity to create one's own political destiny, while each family tries to pose as a bloc that can influence power.

The political differences that we sometimes notice among politicians who hail from the same ethnic group or the same region rarely offer a counter-example or an opposing view to the forces that control the mechanisms of power. They simply express the plurality of regular factors that produce and reproduce political conflict, even if the forces that set ethnic tensions in motion may be determined by other factors. There are many identities that can be rallied and their usefulness depends on a given situation. It should be borne in mind that the political leader can only play his role in the particular scenarios determined by history and in the economic situation with its available strategies and instruments.

Since the negotiations of 1994 which led to the government convention and eventually to the Arusha Accord, it is this theory which guided the interpretation of the Burundian conflict as a 'political conflict with extremely serious ethnic dimensions'. While taking this factor into account, the main component of Protocol II of the Accord was power sharing between the ethnic groups and the parties. It was a matter of ensuring that the majority ethnic group obtained the political majority

and the minority ethnic group the political minority. The percentages of posts offered to the parties of the two sides tried to avoid a constant victory of Hutu candidates at each election. This happened despite the conviction that the campaign might be based on using ethnicity as the rallying cry every time. As for the current constitution, it maintains the same quotas in almost the same manner. These efforts of solving the ethnicity issue by incorporating them in institutions have been labelled the 'process of legitimising the illegitimate' by Julien Nimubona (2005:77).

### *Limitations to attempted solutions*

Concretely, we can pick out the following limitations to suggested solutions to the Burundian conflict.

The Kigobe-Kajaga accords after the macabre events of 1993 had a contradiction between the conception and the application of certain resolutions. The signatories agreed to set up institutions headed by people with integrity, that is, people who were not involved in the coup or the massacres. That presupposed that a judicial enquiry would first be appointed to establish those responsible. However, the creation of institutions did not meet the requirements, which shows that it was still not possible to distinguish criminals from honest citizens.

The government convention of 1994 (concluded between the political parties and the government) had a normative approach. It even had primacy over the constitution. According to Article 6 of the Convention, 'Pending its revision, the Constitution of the Republic remains in force in all aspects that are not contrary to the present Convention'. But is a convention which defines itself as an Accord signed between two political parties, a legal way of expressing public justice? The legality of the convention was shrouded in these uncertainties.

Another loophole in the convention was the absence of a competent body to verify the acceptability of candidatures for the post of president. This organ was envisaged in article 67 of the Constitution of 13 March 1992. This indicates the ambiguity which resulted from the coexistence

of the convention and the constitution, which on a legal level, mutually cancelled each other. This situation put in doubt the legitimacy of the administration's decisions. In this case, leaders manoeuvred between the Constitution and the Accord according to situations. This shows the importance of a legal system based on the consensus of the political stakeholders.

Indeed, the state can never be strong if the legal system is weak. On this issue, the words of the Iteka league (1996:4) show that criminals could easily infiltrate institutions, thereby proving our point: 'The political leadership that blocks justice knows very well which of them were directly or indirectly involved in the coup and the genocide of October 1993 as well as in other crimes that followed, especially the creation and running of militias and the ethnic cleaning of urban suburbs'.

Moreover, the Arusha Accord comes with the added threat that it can help multiply criminality, given that rebel movements have been transformed into political parties and criminality is seen as a political benefit. In these conditions, the taking of arms becomes a political enterprise or a first-rate syndicate. Worse still, the Accord is silent on individual and collective responsibilities that have been unsettling people from independence until today. The future commission of enquiry risks having among its ranks perpetrators of these tragedies or their accomplices and ipso facto, it would play the officious role of covering up reality and those responsible.

Further, the Accord resolves the ethnicity issue by embedding it in institutions. As well expressed by Julien Nimubona (2005:79), 'the Arusha process and the Accords that followed it yielded to a "governmental ethnicism" by examining the problem from an ethnic angle to give it an ethnic solution'. While agreeing with Nimubona's theory, we admit that this process, largely dominated by those who created political ethnicity in order to take full advantage of it, has validated ethnic ideology and made its beneficiaries more prominent. The politico-ethnic image of the institutions created by the process corroborates our assertion.



The solution of co-opting as a corrective political measure for ethnic attitudes of voters has certainly respected the ethnic quotas which the Burundian negotiators at Arusha reached as a compromise. The direct consequence was that institutions based on ethnicity were weakened. Even in so-called political bodies like the army, the police and the magistrates, appointment to top posts is based on ethnicity. These bodies are thus politicised and ethnicised and therefore weakened by ethnicised considerations.

Therefore then, the ethnic frontiers in Burundi have been produced and reproduced to be manipulated by political leaders during social interactions. The maintenance of these frontiers lies in the recognition and the strategic validation of differences. An analysis of identities and cultural diversity shows us that in Burundi 'ethnic groups have a history' and are social structures with an important role. In this atmosphere of fighting for power and mobilisation of ethnic identities, what can be the role of culture in resolving such conflicts?

### **Identity and cultural diversity in Burundi**

This section discusses the common and shared fundamental values, the role of cultural diversity in resolving conflicts and building peace, the role of traditional mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and the promotion of a positive contribution by cultural diversity in peace building and post-conflict reconciliation.

#### **Preliminary considerations on the key concepts: culture, cultural diversity, identity and peace**

According to the Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO 2005), culture should be considered as the distinctive spiritual and material, intellectual and emotional traits that characterise a society or a social group. In addition to arts and literature, it encompasses ways of life, living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.

Cultural diversity is manifested in the various forms in which the human heritage is expressed, enriched and transmitted, not only through cultural expressions but also through diverse modes of artistic creation and distribution, by whatever means or technology.

Mudimbe (1993:96) says that 'if cultures are different, just like people and countries are different, the role of each culture is nevertheless the same everywhere: to promote liberty (in all its connotations) and affirm the right to existence in the political sense of the word'.

The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) states in its preamble that cultural diversity which grows in an atmosphere of democracy, tolerance, social justice and mutual respect between peoples and cultures is indispensable for peace and security at the local, national and international levels. It underlines the importance of culture in social and general cohesion.

The term 'durable peace' alludes to a situation characterised not only by the absence of physical violence but also by calmness of spirit and a climate of concord and confidence between members of the national collective. Such a situation helps to create a moral and political climate, which is a prerequisite for durable peace. It is in a political and psychological environment characterised by the feeling of the 'national us' that reconciliation of the past and the future, a dissolution of sentimental walls, and a commitment to common values and cooperation can be attained. Peace is a condition of stability and security that leads to development.

According to the declaration, culture is at the heart of contemporary debates on identity, social cohesion and the development of an economy that is based on knowledge. The declaration states that respect for cultural diversities, tolerance, dialogue and cooperation in an atmosphere of confidence and mutual understanding is one of the best guarantors of peace and international security.

Several definitions of identity exist. We are going to use the one offered by Alex Mucchielli (1994:5):

Identity is a collection of criteria, and factors that define a subject and an internal feeling. This feeling of identity is made up of different feelings: feelings of unity, coherence, belonging, values, autonomy and confidence – built around the will to live.

In the case of Burundi, in his article on ethnicity and citizenship, Ntahombaye (2005:50) showed that identity references in traditional society were individual identifications using individual names (*izina*) with motivations and meanings for acts of grandeur and bravery (*umuryango*), and details about belonging to the nuclear family (*urugo*, 'enclosure'), the clan (*umuryango*) and the *ubwoko*. This last category has been wrongly translated as ethnic groups, namely the Baganwa, the Bahutu, the Batutsi and the Batwa. These groups, however, just form components of the same people and a true nation state.

### **One people, one language, one culture**

As stated earlier, the Burundian nation was built by our ancestors, driven by a common desire to live together on a basis of fundamental values handed down from generation to generation through oral tradition (tales, proverbs, riddles, poems) and solid social structures which evolved and were adapted according to the context of time and place.

By drawing inspiration from the elements of culture as defined by Le Thanh Khôi: language, beliefs and associated ideological, religious and popular practices, family and social organisation, techniques of production and occupation of space, way of life, artistic perception and expression, daily activities, Philippe Ntahombaye and Domitien Nizigiyimana (2001:55-75) outlined the socio-cultural base of the Burundian nation as follows:

Firstly, there is the linguistic and cultural homogeneity with the use of the same language – Kirundi, spoken by all Burundians, even if there are some regional variants caused by social and lexical factors

– the popular beliefs – belief in one superior being, Imana, creator and giver of life, master of all men and all things – and works of art and literature – such as those described by Jean-Baptiste Ntahokaja (1993) in his book *Plaidoyer pour l'Afrique* (Plea for Africa), and those found in the diversity of cultural expressions.

Secondly, there is an organisation promoting social cohesion and peaceful coexistence, operating from the Hill with their lineage traditions and system of judicial arbitration by the *bashingantahe*. To this day, the Hill continues to be the first basic structure of political and social organization of the state, a real pillar of the society with a strong interrelatedness of the various components – the *Bahutu*, the *Batutsi*, the *Batwa*, and the *Baganwa*. Its organisation of daily life is stamped with unity and solidarity in its daily social and economic activities such as deeds of mutual help (*ikibiri*), particularly in difficult moments as when a family member dies or in celebrations of the various stages in life (birth, marriage, appointment of a noble, ending of funeral rites).

What are the essential elements of this common core? In fact, as the Charter for the Renaissance of African Culture (2006) states, all human communities are basically governed by rules and regulations based on culture. How do these values evolve and how can they help in the reconstruction of a nation ravaged by conflicts, a nation experiencing a crisis of values and of national identity?

### **The fundamental traditional values of Burundian society**

The various literary expressions that have just been mentioned, the customs, the beliefs and the various institutions reveal to us the fundamental values on which the Burundian nation was built: moral and social values like *ubushingantahe*, *ubuntu*, *ubupfasoni*, the love of common work and the love of effort, solidarity and mutual help, the sense of responsibility and of keeping one's word (*kugumya ibanga*), human rights (respect for life and for others' property), reconciliatory justice

(*kwuzuriza abatase*), the belief in one God without forgetting good neighbourliness and the sense of cohabitation, respect for the truth and even the duty to speak the truth no matter the cost, prudence, humane-ness, the spirit of initiative, a sense of honour and dignity, dialogue and concertation (*kuja inama*).

Unfortunately, the collection of values promoted by society coexisted with negative values, which were also visible in the same society. These anti-values have to be fought just like the habit of laziness and minimum effort, hypocrisy, the tendency to tell lies, egocentricity, injustice, exaggerated conformism and opportunism.

### **Crisis of values and increase of negative values**

From the anthropological and socio-cultural dimension as elaborated in this study, the most important component of this crisis is the degradation of the socio-cultural values that make up the Burundian nation as defined above. The degradation began with colonialism through education and evangelisation and continued under the various regimes, even though there were efforts to revamp national culture. Today, the bitter diagnosis is that the crisis which Burundi is facing has led to the degradation of cultural values and institutions that had over centuries built the identity and unity of Burundian people and the characteristics of the citizen such as respect for life, the spirit of dialogue, respect for the truth, mutual help and solidarity – values which had formed the moral, social and cultural bases of the society.

Liboire Kagabo (1995:392) highlighted three approaches through which the values of national unity were seriously shaken by the crisis of October 1993: an ideological commitment to division with the emergent idea of partitioning the state as a solution for the country, a parallel and even contradictory interpretation of the country's history and events that occurred, and a marginalising of those who defend national unity and reject extremism and ethnic polarisation. He stressed that the deterioration of the value of national unity was the starting point of the

deterioration of other societal values such as love for the nation, the sense of common good and the interest of all.

This crisis of value is accompanied by a crisis of parental, educational, administrative and religious authority and a crisis of identity that promotes ethnic belonging to the detriment of citizenship. As indicated above, this crisis and this deterioration of values also strengthened the overturning of values and the upsurge of the already mentioned anti-values which constitute a deadly blow to social harmony and a serious impediment to development.

In this degradation, the media played a devastating role by inciting hatred and violence, as was the case in Rwanda in 1994 'through a rhetoric that perpetuated the stereotypes, the fear of others and a feeling of imminent danger' (Marie Soleil Frère 2005:67).

The report of the international consultant Abdou Latif Coulibaly (2000:32) underlines the necessity to make the media serve the cause for peace, civil harmony and tolerance among the various groups and communities in the country.

These anti-values unfortunately led to the legitimisation of negative elements as the criteria for social promotion and accession to power. To this list we can add, for explanatory purposes, mimicry and resignation, obscurantist practices, failure to take control of one's destiny (*Imana ni yo yabishante*), sociability as well as a refusal to be original, sectarianism and negative solidarity, seeking of refuge in sects that have sprung up everywhere, discouragement of development that could alleviate poverty and de-escalate conflict. These tendencies affect collective life by often offering simple answers to complex aspects of human existence such as life, death, disease and poverty.

We have to question the role that these new religious movements play in the creation or resolution of conflicts and their impact on the lives of the population, their contribution to the reconstruction or the destruction of the country, within a context of globalisation. It is therefore necessary

to analyse the reasons behind the current proliferation of sects that we are witnessing and the role that they play in relation to these cultural values. On this subject, a trend is beginning to reveal itself: it blames this proliferation of sects that attract large numbers of rural and urban people on the social crisis that Burundi is currently facing.

Among the faithful who fill up the worshipping sites of these sects, we mostly find people who have serious problems and who have found a promise of a solution only in the preaching of these sects. Since these problems are material, moral and/or psychological, the organising of meeting days between the established churches and representatives of these sects may make it possible to point out the unnecessary confusion caused by the many sects and to suggest a better way to follow when faced with an apparently unsolvable problem.

After looking at this bleak picture, what is the role that culture can play in conflict resolution and in the protection of harmony and social peace? In light of the conflicts that are tearing apart and undermining a society that shares a common culture, how can these fundamental values of the traditional society be reinstated to contribute to the reconstruction of the Burundian nation?

### **The role of culture in the resolution of the Burundian conflict**

In the tradition of Burundi, as already said, there are solid institutions, socio-cultural values, practices and rites that guarantee social harmony and peaceful conflict resolution. These institutions, practices and rites as well as social discourse, precepts and norms are part of the cultural heritage that need to be protected but also adapted for current circumstances. The prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts are closely linked to education in a culture of peace and human rights. Among these institutions the family, structures of social relations and institutions of

social harmony and conflict resolution should be mentioned, and most importantly, the *bashingantahe* institution.<sup>3</sup>

### **The family evening school and other social structures**

The family is the ideal structure where education for peace should begin. It is here that the solid pillars of peace and social integration are shaped, paving the way for success. Isaac Nguema (1995:5) explains this eloquently when he says:

The prevention of violent acts can actually be done through education which must start within the family and continue at all levels of education; pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary – in all technical and professional directions (schools of public administration, police and security training, engineering, etc.).

This family education in the evening used to take place through stories, fables, proverbs and other literary genres that actually constitute an immense treasure chest for a culture of peace. In his doctoral thesis, Jean-Bosco Ndikuryayo (2000) eloquently demonstrated how proverbs are popular pieces of advice to protect the main values with regard to social harmony, such as respect, tolerance, solidarity and love for our neighbour.

In addition to the family, there exist neighbourhood structures and social relations that are based on family ties and marriage bonds, and are consolidated by systems of constant exchanging of gifts. Clans also represent a factor of unity. Even at the level of the Hill, there are several clans in which inter-clan and interethnic marriages have created blood relations and greater marriage unions that drastically reduce the risk of open conflict. These interethnic marriages that have been in existence for a long time need to be encouraged.

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3 The explanations here are based on a study commissioned by UNESCO, Ntahombaye & Manirakiza 1997.



The relationships that emanate from family and social structures are strengthened by habits and rites, social discourse, forbidden practices and taboos that contribute to education for peace and human rights. Among these practices and social rites, one can cite the habit of exchanging gifts and material goods with the intention of building and cementing good relationships among families, the last rite of the funeral procedure (*ukuganduka*), which presents an opportunity to assemble all the acquaintances and family relations in order to settle officially and publicly, and in presence of the entire lineage (*umuryango*), any dispute related to the succession of an adult person.

Examples of social expressions can be found in the names of individuals, various elements of dialogue and in the balancing effect when critical opinions are exchanged in the form of advising, calling to order or promoting good neighbourliness. It is therefore a means of resolving all kinds of social conflict.

Can we not liken the father who named his child Ndekatabane ('Let me live with you') to the dream of Martin Luther King, which all Burundians have to buy into? 'I have a dream', he said, 'that one day, all men will rise and finally understand that they were made to live together as brothers'.

Forbidden practices and taboos are guides, leading conscience in the right direction by showing the consequence of every action; preventing deviation from good habits and maintaining a peaceful society. So, for example, 'it is forbidden for a child to kill a lizard; if he or she does so, his/her mother's breasts will fall off' (*Nta mwana yica umuserebany, nyina yoca acika amabere*).

The question that we have to ask at this juncture is how to exploit and make full use of these treasures in the education for peace and peaceful resolution of conflicts. If there are no short-term answers for the political conflicts, it is this kind of formal and informal education that has to be envisaged and developed in the long term.

## **The use of traditional values, methods and institutions in the resolution of the Burundian conflict**

### *Reaffirming the value of national unity*

The Third Republic initiated the policy of dialogue that led to the adoption of the Charter of National Unity and consensus to reconstruct the country on the basis of values that, in the past, united the Burundian nation and people. In fact, the symbiosis and cohesion have to be sought and built around values shared by the various sections, while ethnicism is rejected. It is the culture of shared values, the culture of attitudes and behaviours, that can promote the coming together of the people.

The Charter of National Unity was elaborated by a national commission charged with studying the question of national unity after the tragic events of Ntega and Marangara (in the north of the country) on 15 August 1998. The commission had to propose durable solutions to the crisis of identity that the country had witnessed. This Charter is supported by monuments of unity built all over the country and which, in principle are unification symbols for the nation and reminders of ideals that the country wants to promote. Each year, one day, the 5<sup>th</sup> of February, is devoted to public celebrations and speeches reiterating the importance of this Charter.

Even if the appeal to this value has had limited results despite the massive efforts mobilised to ensure its success, it is the values that Burundian people share – that is, the culture of dialogue and mediation – that have enabled the various negotiations to bring about real results.

What has been lacking is the concrete application, not only of the recommendations of this Charter but also – and especially – of the correction of the injustice and exclusiveness that impede this unity.

It should be emphasised, however, that the initiative to rehabilitate the *bashingantahe* institution falls within this set of values to be strengthened with a view to rebuilding social harmony.

*The role played by the **bashingantahe** institution*

For long, the *bashingantahe* has been an institution of social cohesion and peaceful conflict resolution. The interdisciplinary study (Ntahombaye et al 2001), a product of thorough research, instigated by the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Nicolas Mayugi, on rehabilitating *ubushingantahe*, has revealed its origin, its development and its cultural, social, judicial and political functions. It also described its evolution and its weakening by colonial and subsequent powers. The institution is based on values like respect of the truth, a sense of family and social responsibility, the spirit of justice and equity, devotion and love of work, the sense of common good, moderation and stability.

The study on traditional techniques and mechanisms of peaceful conflict resolution (Ntahombaye 1999) provided an overview of the main characteristics (national, multidimensional and universal, collegiate and consensual) of the institution. It also highlights three mechanisms for the functioning of the institution, especially with regard to peaceful conflict resolution: mediation, conciliation (*kwumvikanisha*, *kunywanisha*) and arbitration in case conciliation fails. These principles have to be respected since they come from commitments made during appointment (*ukwatirwa*): adhering to undertakings (*kugumya ibanga*), neutrality, dialogue and conciliation (*kuja inama*), consensus and joint decision making; a sense of the common interests and responsibility; insistence on the truth, discretion and impartiality (*kugumya ibanga*), acceptance of the procedure (free oral expression in public) and the authority of the council of elders, voluntary participation (*agatuku k'abagabo*), and the sense of compromise and tolerance that makes consensus possible.

As Filip Reyntjens and Stef Vandeginste (2000:157) point out, the Arusha political negotiation occurred almost exclusively at the macro-political and urban levels. Despite the request that had been made, the *bashingantahe* institution itself was not formally included in the political negotiations. It is at the local level where the institution continues to

enjoy strong credibility among the population and plays a positive role in resolving conflict and maintaining social unity.

The role of the *bashingantahe* is fundamental because – as Simao Souisidoula (2005:57) points out when he talks about traditional chiefs – ‘these leaders are actually the veritable custodians of local values like tolerance, wisdom, moderation, compromise, general consensus and solidarity, a spirit of openness and peaceful alternatives’.

In fact, before and during the crisis, the *bashingantahe* played an important role in the resolution of family, social and land conflicts through a justice of proximity and conciliation (*intahe yo ku mugina*). The *bashingantahe* played a major role in the rehabilitation of victims and welcoming back of refugees. During the crisis, they saved human lives and helped to maintain understanding between the different groups despite certain shortcomings and difficulties.

On this subject, the study carried out with the support of the Life and Peace Institute, ‘The role of the *bashingantahe* during the crisis’ (Ntahombaye & Kagabo 2003), gives eloquent testimony on the *bashingantahe* as real defenders of human rights. The programmes broadcasted by Radio *Isanganiro* (*Inkingi z’ubuntu*) also attest to the same thing. Other studies also show the efficacy of this institution in resolving conflict and protecting social unity. It is also the conclusion of studies commissioned by the non-governmental organisations Africaire, RCN and Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and carried out in provinces of the country with a statistical analysis of judgments passed by resident tribunals on the strength of *bashingantahe* advice in the settlement of land, family and social succession disputes at the level of the Hill (*intahe yo ku mugina*) before recourse to resident tribunals.<sup>4</sup> The efficiency of this institution is manifested by the proximity of justice to the seekers of justice, and by the conciliation in the settlement of disputes. In fact, resident tribunals have confirmed more than 60% of decisions.

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4 Cf RCN 2006:159.

The institution is currently legally recognised at the level of communal law, and collaboration is envisaged between the *bashingantahe* and locally elected leaders in the resolution of family and social disputes about relations between neighbours, succession, land disputes, organisation and structures at all levels. It is therefore allowed to play an efficient role in the quest for solutions, and to become rehabilitated as an institution. Although opinions differ on the form of this revitalisation, no one questions its justification. There are processes in place to find a common ground on this subject.

### Way forward and conclusion

#### *On the political level*

For long, ethnicity has dominated the political scene in Burundi. In a study on the perception of ethnic identity in electoral processes by Julien Nimubona (2000:29), which was specifically aimed at suggesting solutions to extricate the country from the ethnicity paradigm and rebuild a sense of citizenship, the answers suggested show that the masses are more and more aware that ethnic groups are used as instruments to satisfy personal interests. They believe that power sharing, good governance, equity and social justice could be the best remedies to deliver the country from the ethnic cleavage. Nimubona stresses that many analysts have already shown that the conflict which was characterised by ethnic reflexes, opinions, attitudes and behaviours was the result of a complex, dynamic and systematic socio-cultural construction and not the result of pure natural hatred. The various agreements and accords have rather (and unfortunately so) consolidated and even institutionalised these perceptions and attitudes. Political competition has been transformed into conflicts tainted by violent ethnic manipulations. These violent ethnic conflicts played a definite role in ruining the national economy. At the moment, therefore, the problem is not so much choosing the type of democracy, but rather pulling all forces together so that democracy should really be the foundation of economic development. In any case,

one of the functions of democracy is to establish an atmosphere in which social relations are negotiated without resorting to violence. Instead of allowing an institutionalised ethnicity to govern politics, the following should happen:

- ◆ An education in citizenship, participation and democratic culture. This should allow the emergence of a constitutional state in which responsible citizens courageously exert their rights and duties.
- ◆ The restoring of memory through the recording of the country's history. In fact, as Lemarchand (2002:21) has said, 'the time has come to restore the memories of the Hutu and Tutsi communities, as a memory neither selective, nor vengeful; but as a 'mixed' memory which keeps alive the common humanity of both groups'.
- ◆ The depoliticising and demystifying of ethnicity. That is, ethnic identity should not be a political favour. All identities have to be protected to guarantee unity in diversity.
- ◆ So-called ethnic groups should not benefit from favouritism by a regime, or suffer from discrimination.
- ◆ At least one year before its application, the usefulness and appropriateness of ethnic and political quotas for participation in institutions and the impact such quotas can have on the process of reconciliation, should be addressed (National Report on Durable Human Development 2005).

Finally, the election of institutions should be the moment for the Burundian people to choose from its midst the citizens who are most righteous, most enlightened, most meritorious and most worthy, and to confer the power on them. That would ensure the establishment of trustworthy, legitimate institutions enjoying national and international support. That is what has to be done if the Burundian politicians want to help the people get back to development. The advantage of a government of the best leaders will be that these remedies may be combined in a coherent plan of action. If these conditions are not met, democracy,

which wants the people to be the alpha and the omega, the source and the end of power, will risk promoting predatory politics and will prove to be, in this country at least, a political disaster and an unrealised Utopia.

*On the socio-cultural level*

*1. A cultural policy for the promotion of peace and national reconciliation*

This culture can always help to find dynamic solutions through language, cultural activities and manifestations, beliefs and customs that protect social unity. For this purpose, there should be a willingness and a clear commitment.

A cultural policy document for the promotion of peace and national reconciliation has just been developed by government. It outlines areas of priority. After looking at the serious identity crisis and the tragedies that the country has experienced since independence, the policy states the government's desire to prioritise culture for the sake of peace, reconciliation, social harmony and development.

In the retrospective study of Emile Mworoha and others (Mworoha et al 2005:110), it is said that 'in the face of the destructive role of poisoning with hatred, revenge and inciting to murder... the challenge is to find a route to the building of peace, the promotion of a culture of tolerance, the emergence of good governance and a contribution to the prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts'.

According to the political analyst Julien Nimubona (2000:39), the pillars on which a culture of peace, reconciliation and good governance can be built are: a common and rich social base, a general quest for peaceful coexistence, a political will to safeguard national unity and to peacefully resolve conflicts through negotiation and the concept of power sharing.

It is therefore within the context of this cultural policy that the shared values and their benefits for peace building have to be elaborated.

The following main activities may be implemented with the aim of promoting peace, conflict resolution and reconciliation.

(a) *Generally strengthening dialogue and consultation at all levels*, not only between the administration and the people but also among politicians and in civil society. It will also be an opportunity to educate society on the importance of these values. Here, churches can play a major role.

(b) *Rehabilitating traditional social and cultural values that promote social harmony and peace* while taking into account the new forms of social interactions that should be encouraged in order to check the tendency towards individualism.

(c) *Rehabilitating and modernising the bashingantahe institution*, updating and adapting it to society. It is on the basis of the role that the *bashingantahe* play in the promotion of a humane justice, as recommended by the National Report on Durable Human Development (2005), that it is necessary to strengthen the structures of arbitration and conciliation that are locally available for the settlement of land disputes (*bashingantahe* councils and other family and community councils) while enlarging their legal base and competences in matters of procedure, land rights, individual rights, and family rights with regard to succession and donations.

With regard to the modernising process, it will also be necessary to explore how the *bashingantahe* institution and the Ombudsman envisaged in the Constitution can be linked and can complement each other. In the quest for truth and reconciliation to be embarked upon by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that will be set up as stipulated by the Arusha Accord, the *bashingantahe* institution has to be involved so that it actually plays the role of conciliation and reconciliation, based on what really happened on the Hills.

(d) *Incorporating the values of peace, conflict resolution and human rights into the education system*. This project is being implemented with a primary course on civil and human education and a secondary course



on education for peace and human rights. There are also initiatives like those of the BNEC (National Bureau of Catholic Education) which has just introduced this teaching of values in their schools.<sup>5</sup> This teaching of values has to be instituted and propagated in all public and private schools as well as in literacy programmes or via the media, cultural events, sports activities and development work, among others.

(e) *Implementing a vast programme of national reconciliation* especially focused on the youth. It should include programmes of civil education, and of the promotion of the values of peace, tolerance, democracy and citizenship (National Report on Durable Human Development 2005).

(f) *Involving and supporting cultural associations* in the promotion of values of peace and human rights through activities such as dance, story telling and plays.

(g) *Carrying out an extended study on the proliferation of religions and sects and on their role in resolving conflict and harmonising the efforts of different denominations to promote peace.* This study will make it possible to analyse the relationship between traditional and religious approaches to reconciliation. A discussion started by ACCORD between traditional chiefs (the *bashingantahe*) and religious leaders deserves to be relaunched within the framework of the search for truth and reconciliation.

(h) *Involving the media.* The Burundian society is still oriented towards oral communication. This is the reason why the media, both radio and press, can play a crucial role in this education and moralisation of the society on values of peace and conflict resolution. If in the past they incited racial hate and murder, today they have to be tools of peace, justice and reconciliation. That is why the training of journalists needs to be strengthened so that they can produce programmes and publish articles that promote a culture of peace, and prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. For this purpose, a general information and communication strategy is also necessary.

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5 Cf Bureau National de l'Enseignement Catholique (BNEC) 2005.

2. *Interrelating these perspectives with those of the African renaissance*

Among the objectives and the principles of the Charter of the African Cultural Renaissance, there is a strong emphasis on strengthening the role of culture in the promotion of peace and good governance as well as the development of all the dynamic values of African cultural heritage that promote human rights, social unity and human development.

The International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region (Dar-es-Salaam, 19-20 November 2004) also mentioned the need to promote policies and strategies that are guided by respect for values, principles of democracy and good governance and respect for human rights. Such approaches should combat the root causes of the conflicts concerned and find durable solutions for the persistent problems of refugees and displaced people – solutions such as peaceful coexistence of local populations, repatriation and voluntary return of people and integration into local life with the full participation of local authorities and host communities, and if need be, according to tripartite agreements.

The Head of States' Conference in Khartoum (2006) decided among other things in its Declaration on Culture, Integration and African Renaissance to promote the values and cultural practices that have been tried and tested in finding peace and resolving conflict, and to promote cultural diversity and inter-cultural dialogue as tools for integration and development.

The conference also decided to ensure that African values are deeply embedded in education so that the youth can be equipped and prepared to successfully, and from an African perspective, face the challenges of the contemporary world. These decisions provide an opportunity to continue the studies on inter-cultural dialogue and conflict resolution already started by the University.<sup>6</sup>

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6 This reference is to the Sub-regional Seminar on Traditional Social Institutions and their Role in the Promotion and Consolidation of Peace in the Great Lakes Region and in the Horn of Africa (Bujumbura, December 5-8, 2001)

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