

**ADDRESS TO THE NATION BY H.E. PIERRE NKURUNZIZA****PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC****ON THE OCCASION OF THE NEW YEAR 2018**

**Dear Compatriots, Friends of Burundi;**

1. We are seeing off the year 2017 and, at the same time, we are beginning the year 2018, enjoying peace, security and tranquillity in every part and corner of our country. I thank God Almighty for having kept and protected Burundi and the people of Burundi throughout the year 2017 which is coming to an end. To Him be glory and honour, and let him receive the tributes he deserves from the thankful hearts of Burundians.
2. I wish all Burundians wherever they are and foreigners established on our territory, a happy new year 2018. Let it be for everyone a year of peace, happiness and prosperity rooted in God Himself. I wish you a wonderful year, a year of joy among your family members, a year for reaching new horizons in development.  
As you celebrate the-end-of-year, share all that you have prepared, thus showing concord and solidarity, the legacy of our fathers and grandfathers.
3. I thank from the bottom of my heart all those who have fully invested themselves to ensure that peace and security are strengthened throughout the country. I would like to mention here the entire population, administrative officials at all levels, the Defence and Security Forces, the judiciary, and the friends of Burundi who have supported us through various projects.
4. This year's main theme is: "Let's meditate deeply on our country, let's know where we come from and where we are going".  
This theme will continue to inspire us until 2019. Indeed, no one should ignore that many Burundians have not yet understood what a native country really is. This sometimes pushes them to take dead-end roads because of ignorance or betrayal towards their country and their fellow citizens.

**Dear Compatriots, Friends of Burundi,**

5. We all have to meditate deeply on whom we are as Burundians, and from there, ask ourselves what we are called to do as sons and daughters of Burundi. We must also understand that where we are, other people have been there before us, and others will come after us. We should therefore be concerned with the importance of leaving a positive legacy and a good reputation for our children and grandchildren who will have role models to emulate.
6. This is an appeal to all Burundians, including Burundians who have acquired other nationalities in their host countries. There is no exaggeration; some Burundians living abroad sometimes forget who they really are.
7. I wish that those who have lost their way can rediscover the true path and see the light. Our ancestors said, "The water boils but never forgets its natural temperature." And then "Every path ends in a house". In addition, "A small thing you own is more satisfying than a big thing you borrow".
8. Just like you cannot change your biological parents, so let no one delude themselves: no country in the world will surpass your native land. Burundi belongs to Burundians, it is a common field; God's special gift that we must treasure and protect day and night, whatever the circumstances.
9. In order to take care of this gift properly, we must learn and know our history, our culture and the traditions that have always characterized Burundi and the people of Burundi. We have to know right and wrong deeds by both Burundians and foreigners but most of all we have to know how Burundians used to solve their problems. We must understand that ignorance is a handicap and that many people die because of ignorance.
10. Knowing our history will help understand our mother land and this will be a strong foundation for our future.
11. Our ancestors said: "You enter an unknown forest you come out with an unknown cane." Let us meditate on our country, let us understand where we come from and where we are going". Let's distinguish the cursed valleys from the blessed ones, avoiding wandering like people with no vision or plan. Finally, let us avoid being as stupid as to smile at our enemies.

12. Just as our ancestors fought the enemy together in the past, fighting for the country in solidarity with one another, categorically refusing to become slaves of strangers and have succeeded, punished severely those who did not comply with Burundian cultural and traditional values, let us make an unwavering common front and say no to those who want to steal our Independence, which may force us into slavery again.
13. The battle that remains to be fought today is the struggle for development, as well as the fight to eradicate the syndrome of ethnic hatred sown by the colonizers. Even though those who still emphasize ethnic divisions are very few, it is not yet time to declare victory. Indeed, our ancestors said: "A wild fruit may be small, but that will not stop it from having a bitter taste".

**Dear Compatriots, Friends of Burundi,**

14. Security is a reality in Burundi. As proof, workers regularly go about their activities; nearly 200,000 refugees have returned to their homes and around 40,000 have registered already to return home; tourists from all over the world come to Burundi, without forgetting the unrestricted trips throughout the country night and day.
15. I wish to reiterate my call to our brothers and sisters living in exile to return; they should understand that their true nationality is the one acquired at birth in Burundi, and that Burundi needs us all. I thank those who have already responded to my call, and take this opportunity to ask them to tell the truth to those they have left behind.
16. We owe significant progress we have made in consolidating peace and security to the vigilance and bravery of the police: this year, 310 groups of criminals were dismantled, 128 rifles and 325 grenades were seized, while 1260 grenades and other weapons were destroyed.
17. The Administration and the Police Forces vigorously fought against fraud, especially that of minerals, to the point that more than 19 tons of coltan, one ton and a half (1.5) of cassiterite, 7 and a half tons of nickel, 77 tons of coffee, 2 tons of sugar, 71 tons of chemical fertilizer were seized, and more than 7 million litres of prohibited drinks were seized and destroyed.

18. In politics, the National Commission in charge of the National Reconciliation, and the National Commission for the Prevention of Genocide, war crimes, and grave crimes have been appointed in accordance with the Arusha Accord and the Constitution.
19. In the economic sector, the Burundian Revenue Authority (OBR) has collected more than BIF 735 billion against BIF 720 billion that was expected, which means an increase of 18 per cent as compared to the 2016 performance.
20. 98% of communal markets which had been given to the private sector have been handed over back to the Communes, and the Communes' economies are doing better. Revenues have generally increased four times.
21. Within the framework of fighting against hunger, the Government has donated 46,000 tons of chemical fertilizer, 9,266 tons of dolomite, 800 kg of vegetable seeds, 20,000 fruit trees and 500,000 plants of passion-fruit. Studies have been conducted on food crops such as potatoes, beans, cassava, bananas, sweet potatoes, cocoyam, and so on.
22. Concerning crops that Burundi normally exports, nearly one and a half million plants were distributed to farmers; more than 10,000 tons of coffee were sold, generating more than BIF 52 billion of income, which means a 10% increase in production. Approximately 10,000 tons of tea was sold and an amount of BIF 46 billion cashed, and about USD 26 million was collected by the Public Treasury. New varieties of palm trees have been planted, but the old ones are also still standing and a production of 20,000 tons of palm oil is expected at the end of 2017.

**Dear Compatriots, Friends of Burundi;**

23. All the efforts of the population in the development of their country would be worthless if the National Strategy for Good Governance and Fight against Corruption and related harms does not enjoy the support of any Burundian citizen.

In the implementation of this program, 242 files were made, and it turned out that more than BIF 1 billion and about USD 500,000 had to be recovered to go back to the public treasury. Lots of goods smuggled into the country have also been seized; surveys were conducted in the public services, and it is apparent that

nearly BIF 4 billion never reached the treasury. I ask the concerned services to diligently recover this money.

24. In the justice sector, the courts rendered more than 18,500 judgments, and more than BIF 1 billion came into the treasury thanks to the action of the Anti-Corruption Court and the National Land Registry.
25. The Government's lawyers saved the State from paying BIF 28 billion and about 225 million US dollars in trials that have been opened locally, and more than BIF 14 billion for trials in which Burundi was involved in abroad. This represents over 11 million US dollars. The concerned ministry has also been able to recover 544 hectares of public lands of which people had unduly taken possession.
26. The implementation of the Presidential pardon has allowed the release of 2,576 convicts. The defendants who do not have means as well as those who live with a handicap (in total 1,511) benefited from a free assistance of a lawyer from the Ministry of Justice. Nine volumes of legal texts that were written in French were translated into Kirundi.
27. In the public health sector, the program to provide free health care for pregnant mothers as well as children under 5 has been continued, and will continue. Because of some dishonest attitudes that have already been observed, the Government has already adopted salutary measures that will allow this programme to be conducted in fairness. I wish that this program benefits Burundian Citizens who comply with the Persons and Family Code.
28. In order to fight against malaria which had become an epidemic disease, 2,243,645 families throughout the country received insecticide-treated mosquito nets. Cholera was fought in the communes of Rumonge, Mpanda, Isare, Ntakangwa and Nyanza Lac. The Government has continued its program of providing drugs free of charge to HIV-positive people, lepers and tuberculosis patients; children have continued to receive planned vaccines, and Burundi ranks first in the implementation of these programs in Africa.
29. In the national education sector, the distribution of teacher's manuals and student's books for grade 7 has been carried out throughout the country. A Ministerial Ordinance establishing good conduct and protecting morals in public

and private schools has been signed; teachers with insufficient teaching hours were redeployed in the schools where there was a shortage of teachers.

At the university level, the Master's and Doctoral Schools have been opened.

30. In the energy and mining sector, Rare Earths mining works have been launched in Mutambu Commune in BUJUMBURA Province, and mining activities for gold and related minerals (silver and copper) have started in Mabayi Province CIBITOKÉ.

31. As regards electricity, the electricity purchase agreement between INTERPETROL and REGIDESO for the production of 30 MW has been effectively implemented. Currently there is a visible increase in electricity in the city of Bujumbura. Construction works for a hydroelectric plant on the Rusumo Falls have also been launched.

The electrification of different Communes is underway, and we will soon be producing electricity from solar power in the Provinces of Gitega, Makamba and Rutana.

32. In the public works sector, tarmac roads have been completed and inaugurated: the road from Nyanza Lac to Mugina via Mabanda, the first phase of the stretch from Nyakararo to Kibumbu via Mwaro (30 km), and the 2nd phase of the National Road n°13 from Butaganzwa to Ruyigi (19 km). All these roads cover a total length of 94 km.

A fire-fighting truck was purchased for the Bujumbura International Airport.

33. The construction work of the Presidential Palace is at the finishing level, and I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all those who continue to lend a helping hand to us in the development projects of our country. I hereby declare that Burundi has already gone beyond the phase of emergency aid. What we need now are donations and debts for development projects.

34. With regard to the development of the Communes, the Communal Investment Fund, FONIC, has continued the program of giving funds to Communes to carry out their projects, and a loan of almost BIF 35 billion has been provided to around 15,000 people for development projects.

35. Within the framework of community work, the Government in collaboration with the population has built primary, secondary, higher and even university schools; it has built health centres, hospitals, offices for the provincial, communal, up to the

level of local administration of the hill; it has also built stadiums and playgrounds, markets, villages and drinking water fountains.

And many other various infrastructures were built throughout the country, notably hotels to accommodate tourists, houses of prayer and others. Moreover, since we started the program of community works, it is this year that we inaugurated a larger number of infrastructures that are even more presentable.

**Dear Compatriots, Friends of Burundi;**

36. I warmly congratulate all those who fully committed themselves during the community development work. Don't give up the fight, stay strong and firm for it!

37. Among the projects to be carried out in the coming days, let me mention the following:

- To continue the consolidation of peace and security as well as the fight against terrorism.
- To finalize the work and programs remaining among the activities provided in the Constitution and the Arusha Agreement, especially by appointing the members of the National Council for National Unity and Reconciliation as well as the National Observatory for Prevention and Eradication of Genocide, War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity.
- To organize training and reflection sessions on our country. I will do everything possible to eradicate from the hearts of Burundians the seeds of ethnic divisions sown by the colonizer, and thus prepare a better future for our country.
- We will continue to appeal and convince the refugees to return without delay, so that together we can prepare a good future for our country.
- Burundian citizens will have the right to express themselves on major National Projects and Programs as we have always done.
- The construction works of the Rumonge port will be launched, and the port of Bujumbura will be renovated.
- We will make the public aware of key areas and sectors that can attract investors.
- The National Programme to raise awareness about and fight against corruption, fraud and trafficking will continue.

- Bujumbura International Airport will be renovated to comply with international aviation and airport standards, and to bring it up to level of modernity of other countries' airports.
- Young people will receive entrepreneurship training that will enable them to design projects themselves and create their own jobs. On this same point, there is a fund that will grant funding to young people wishing to launch their own businesses.
- The Kibumbu-Gitega, Nyamitanga-Bujumbura, Bururi-Gitega via Mahwa (Ryansoro) and Bururi-Makamba roads will be asphalt paved, and many more road projects will be conducted.
- We will continue the major projects currently underway, such as the salary harmonization reform for civil servants, the increase in electricity production, the protection of the environment and free health care for pregnant women and children under the age of five, free schooling for primary schoolchildren, distribution of insecticide-treated mosquito nets, and many other projects aimed at improving living conditions of the population.

**Dear Compatriots, Friends of Burundi;**

38. I could not list all the achievements or projects in a day. I was just making a brief summary. For the rest, Ministers and other officials in charge of various sectors will continue to inform you in detail.

39. Based upon the theme of this year, we should ask ourselves: What should be done to meditate properly on our country and to know where we come and where we are going? Allow me to briefly tell you some of the things that are planned:

- Helping Burundians to know the history of their country, because the past prepares the future. In the same vein, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has been revitalized, and I ask all Burundian citizens to support the work of this Commission.
- Assigning a special place to culture, values and traditions that characterized the heroes of the struggle for the safeguarding of the Burundian nation as well as other Burundians who have put forward the national interest.
- Conducting a survey and designing a project to build a Burundian Cultural Centre.

- Helping Burundians to know and understand that Burundi belongs to Burundians; it is up to us, Burundians, to organize the country and develop it. Foreign input would come on our request, and it is we ourselves who should tell them in which sector their support is needed.
- Knowing and complying with the laws and regulations of the country, and respect and enforce human rights.
- Understanding that we have the obligation to defend National Sovereignty, and consolidate Independence and Democracy in our country.
- Strengthening diplomatic relations with countries and international organizations that respect the sovereignty of our country.
- Designing Development Programs ourselves and ensuring that we implement them without resorting to foreign aid.
- Letting the youth be aware of all projects so that they can understand early that it is by means of work that self-development is achieved and that allows the country to begin an economic take-off.
- Protecting the country's natural resources, fighting against corruption and trafficking.
- Strengthening and protecting Burundian households and families.
- Taking appropriate measures, each according to his / her attributions, with the aim of restoring order in all areas of national life and enabling our country to safeguard its dignity.

**Dear Compatriots, Friends of Burundi;**

40. Before concluding, I would like to remind you once again of the need to change mentality and behaviour, praising the wonders of our country wherever we are, and to showing pride in being called Burundians. Yes, it's a great honour to be Burundian. We have such a beautiful country, a country rich in human and natural resources that other peoples envy. We carry a precious necklace (ikirezi), but we must recognize that it shines, and we will let no one pull it off our neck.
41. How good it would be for all Burundians to go back to the positive values inherited from our ancestors! From the time of the monarchy until the period of independence, God has always been the Support, the Defender and the Protector of Burundi and the Burundian people. "God, the King, Burundi" was the national motto of the Kingdom of Burundi. And we continue to sing these lines of the National Anthem: "O dear Burundi ... My God who gave you to us, protect you for us forever".

Just as God has never let our ancestors suffer disgrace, so He will never let us suffer humiliation. He only asks us to remain faithful to Him, and to give Him the first place in our plans and activities.

42. Another very important thing to keep in mind is that times have changed. We are invited to understand that the current historical changes must go hand in hand with changes in mentality and behaviour among humans; let us give birth to children to whom we are able to provide education, let's avoid leaving strife in our families. I take this opportunity to remind unmarried couple that have not responded to the invitation I have given them to legalise their relationships in accordance with the Persons and Family Code by reminding them that this disobedience is punishable by law.
43. For some time now, we have started a journey that will bring us to true independence, where the Burundian citizen and all foreigners living in Burundi will take control of their destiny: they will feed and govern themselves; they will have their wealth increased and live peacefully; they will fully enjoy their rights and be respected, and they will be able to plan their development and achieve it without having to depend on foreign donors. This is Burundi that we want to leave to our children as a legacy.
44. We cannot achieve this goal if we do not think that Burundi is a common good that God has shared with us all. We must then convince ourselves that we have a common mission to protect this heritage and share equitably the common wealth found there. Justice and Law will become the pillar to support us, and the shield to protect us. Then we will all commit to working together without anyone being staying on the back foot; we will put our flocks together, and we will graze them without prejudice. We will put the means of production together, and we will share the dividends of our work. We will share the joys and sorrows, and we will never forget that we have a common destiny.
45. In order to strengthen peace and stability in the country, in accordance with article 113 of the constitution, we pardon prisoners condemned for no more than five years, pregnant and breastfeeding women, those with apparent handicap, those who have served half their sentence, and others, all based on the weight of their crimes and their behaviour in prison.
46. Due to this measure, more than 2000 inmates are about to go free. We ask them to avoid anything that would push them into reoffending.

47. In conclusion, I would like to invite you to participate massively in the Referendum on the Constitution of the Republic of Burundi when the time comes. This is also an honourable duty to which no citizen should escape, especially when he believes that he has regained independence and that the country belongs to him in the same way as other Burundians.
48. I also take this opportunity to thank those who have already shown their patriotism and strengthened Independence by donating their contribution to the ad hoc account, and I call upon those who remain to join their brothers and sisters. Indeed, it is an honourable initiative that has emerged from the inter-Burundian dialogue, and this will help the Burundians to set up themselves Laws and Regulations that will facilitate the emergence of National Programs that will help Burundian citizens achieve peace, security and the rule of law.
49. As you joyfully continue celebrating the New Year 2018 and go about your daily businesses, I ask you to remain vigilant and avoid any waste. I ask the various officials in the Administration, Security and Justice to keep an eye open as always, so that peace and security are not disturbed during these festive days of Christmas and New Year.
50. I declare to all Burundians that the light and the beauty of the Almighty are about to be seen to citizens and the country as a whole in 2018. Moreover, Burundi is about to take off; the Almighty God is my witness.
51. I would like to express once again my best wishes for New Year 2018 to all of you. May this year be for you a year of God's peace, a year of prosperity in all your businesses and wherever you are. As we celebrate the advent of the New Year, let us have a constant focus on our future and the future of our country. "Let's meditate deeply on our country, knowing where we come from and where we are going".

**God bless you**

**THANK YOU**