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East African Community

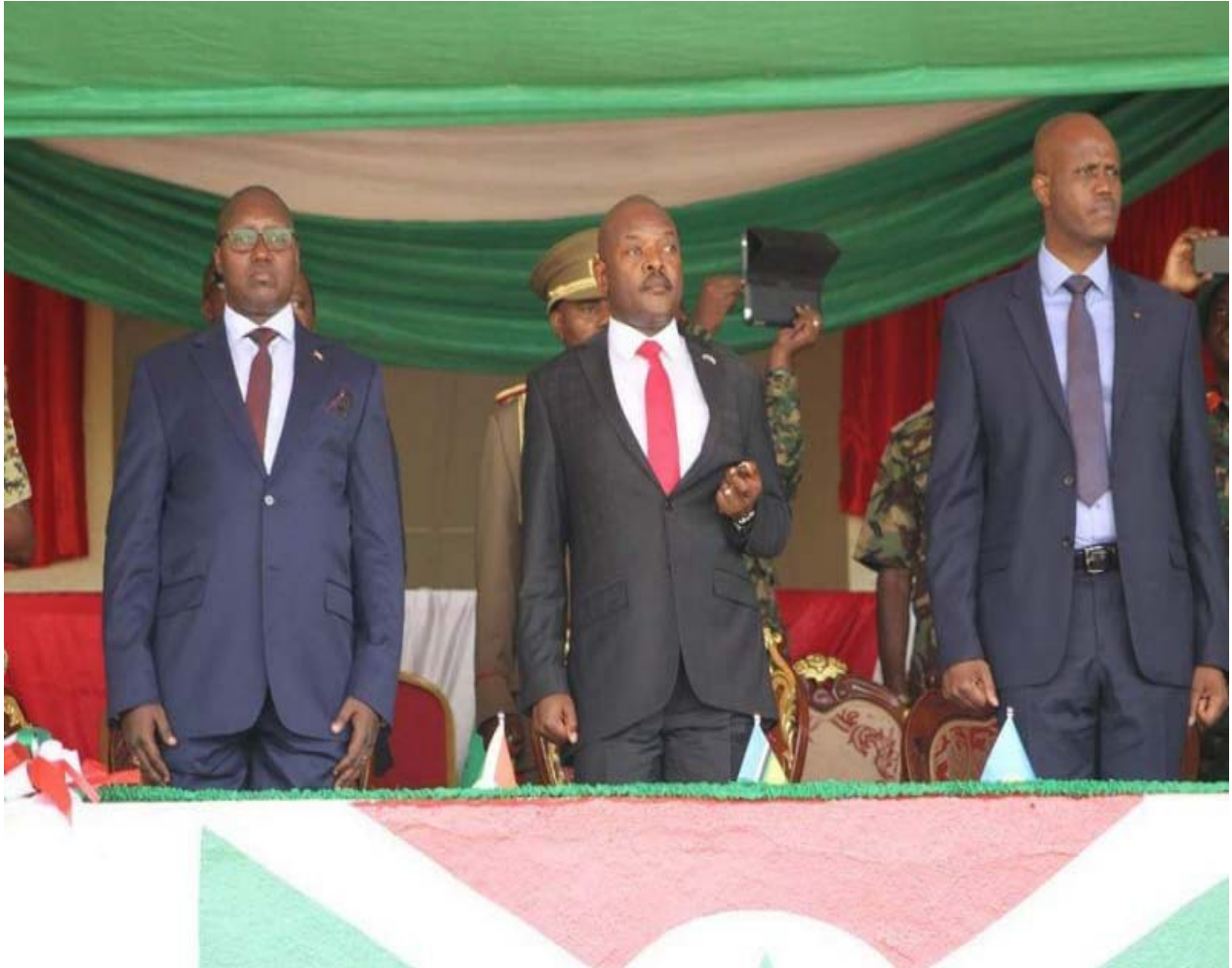
East African Community

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H.E Nkurunziza flanked by his Minister of Defence, Hon. Emmanuel Ntahonvukiye on his right and EAC Secretary General, Amb. Liberat Mfumukeko on his left stand for the EAC Anthem at the official opening of the Military Games and Cultural Event 2017

## ***East African Community Secretariat; Bujumbura, Burundi; 28 August 2017:***

The 11th EAC Military Games and Cultural Event 2017 kicked off at Prince Louis Rwagasore National Stadium over the weekend with an appeal by the President and Commander-in-Chief of National Defence Force of the Republic of Burundi, H.E. Pierre Nkurunziza “to all members of the East African Community to refrain from provoking one another or helping and abetting individuals or groups likely to disrupt peace and security in any other member State”.

The President, who was the Chief Guest at the colorful opening ceremony, stated that “while Sport was unifying and bringing peoples together, let us compete but you should bear in mind that your job as a soldier is not the easiest. While our national armies do all they can to defend their borders and

the region as a whole, you must constantly remember that the threat of terrorism is at an all-time high. We consequently need collective efforts and strategies to fight it”.

H.E. Nkurunziza said by the fact that Burundi was hosting the Event was a clear indication that peace and security was reigning in the country “contrary to what bad-intentioned media and enemies of Burundi spread around the globe”.

He informed the well attended event by both the civilians and invited guests that the games were taking place at a time when Burundi was celebrating ten years since joining the East African Community and his country had gained and contributed a lot ever since it became a member. “Full integration in all sectors is effectively taking shape and this includes the Defence and Security Forces”.

He said culturally, Burundians were proud of themselves for owning drums that had been made by UNESCO part of the global heritage, and Burundi had just scooped the first place worldwide in the recent cultural and tourism exhibitions held in Russia. “I have no doubts that our military were in a position to emulate what their civilian counterparts have been able to achieve recently”, affirmed the President.

He said the region’s efforts in Somalia, Central African Republic and within the Great Lakes Region were examples of the ongoing collective efforts in search of peace in the Region and extended his deep appreciation and gratitude to the Chiefs of the EAC Partner States Defence Forces for their constant and consistent dedication.

“Such a dedication and effort will definitely facilitate the fast tracking and handling of our common problems of security such as terrorism, poaching and cattle rustling which can pose a threat to our regional stability,” noted the President.

H.E. Nkurunziza once again reiterated the commitment of the Republic of Burundi to the integration process and full cooperation within all members of the EAC.

Addressing the same gathering, Burundi’s Defence Minister, Hon. Emmanuel Ntahonvukiye welcomed the contingents to Burundi and said the country was greatly honoured to host the event, which is aimed at fostering the principle of togetherness and solidarity among the Defence Forces of the Community. It is also aimed at promoting physical activity; contribute towards harmonious development of sports and culture in the region, and to the regional and international effort for universal peace.

At the same occasion, the Secretary General of the East African Community, Amb. Liberat Mfumukeko disclosed that the Games and Cultural activities had great significance beyond building confidence among the Armed Forces of the Partner States and that it bears a great symbolic significance having regard to the broader goals and vision of a competitive, prosperous and united East Africa.

He said that the presence of the Chiefs of the Defence Forces, the Service Commanders, General Officers; Defence Liaison Officers; and Members of the Armed Forces Contingents of the Partner States, as well as the ordinary citizens in the stadium demonstrates that the vision of the founding fathers of One People, One Destiny can and will be achieved.

The Secretary General reiterated that peace and security were the prerequisites for social and economic development and with the rising security challenges all over the world, the region needs to build strong armed forces within the EAC framework that could work together to face both the internal and external challenges to the development and progress of the Community. “East Africans continue to look upon the Military to show the way forward especially towards the promotion of peace and solidarity and we must never fail them”, asserted Amb. Mfumukeko.

Uganda's 2nd Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of EAC Affairs and Chairperson of the EAC Council of Minister, Rt. Hon. Kirunda Kivenjija, together with Uganda's Minister of State for Defence and Veteran Affairs, Hon. Lt Col. (Rtd) Bright Rwamirama also attended the official opening ceremony.

In a thrilling opening football match that was kicked-off by H.E Pierre Nkurunziza, Kenya Defence Force defeated National Defence Force of Burundi 1-0.

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