



EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY

OFFICE OF THE FACILITATOR OF THE INTER-BURUNDI

STATEMENT BY THE FACILITATOR, HIS EXCELLENCY BENJAMIN WILLIAM MKAPA, AT THE END OF THE 3RD INTER-BURUNDI DIALOGUE SESSION

(Arusha, Tanzania, 19th February, 2017)

I convened the third session of the Inter-Burundi Dialogue in Arusha, Tanzania, from 16th to 19th February 2017.

The session was attended by Former Heads of State of Burundi, Ombudsman of Burundi, Representatives of registered political parties and other key political actors.

I also met with the Special Envoys to the region and Special Representatives of the United Nations and the African Union who reaffirmed their support to the East African Community-led facilitation. I am encouraged by the readiness of all stakeholders to engage and interact with each other.

During an opening plenary session, I presented the eight-point agenda items identified during the previous dialogue sessions which were endorsed by the 17th Extra-Ordinary Summit of Heads of State of the EAC held on 8 September, 2016 to form the basis for further discussions. I reduced the eight points for ease of consideration into four broad categories, each with appropriate sub-headings. These were:

1. Political Issues;
2. Constitutional, legislative and Electoral conditions;
3. Socio-Economic Situation and humanitarian issues; and
4. Security

These were not of my invention; rather they were adduced from my discussions with parties during the previous consultations, with interested international organizations.

I also shared other documentation related to the dialogue. You examined the documents individually and in groups after which you made written submissions expressing your views and outlining your projection of the way forward. I commend you for the diligence and wide scope with which you addressed the issues and presented the written responses. They will serve to concretize the dialogue in the next phase.

From the submissions, I have noted the following:

1 - The participants acknowledged that notable progress had been made in setting the right conditions for a constructive dialogue, characterised by the willingness to own the ongoing process.

2 - They reaffirmed the principles and spirit of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi as the foundation for sustainable peace, stability and security, as well as the recognition of the political, economic and social rights of all Burundians.

3 - While reaffirming respect for the sovereignty of the Republic of Burundi, they emphasized the obligation of the State to provide security, stability and protection of Human Rights of the people of Burundi.

4 – The participants acknowledged that the current crisis which is rooted in political and electoral disagreement has resulted in substantial displacement of persons, exiled political actors, targeted violence and reduced international financial assistance.

5 – The participants denounced all forms of violence as a means of settling political disputes and committed themselves to peaceful dialogue to achieve sustainable peace and economic prosperity.

6 – They pledged to seek with great urgency consensus on the central pillars of the evolution towards the next elections in 2020 and on the need for a conducive environment for a peaceful and credible electoral process.

7 – The participants took note of the proposed constitutional amendments assembled internally and while acknowledging Burundi's sovereign right to do so, emphasized that priority should be given to the consolidation of peace and stability of the country.

8 – The participants drew attention to the famine being experienced in some parts of Burundi as a result of climate change. They therefore appealed to the international community to provide much needed relief.

9 – The participants appreciated the progress made so far by the Facilitator and the Mediator. However, they urged for the earliest involvement of the EAC Summit to add impetus to the resolution of the crisis.

10. The participants looked forward to the participation of the Government of the Republic of Burundi in order to add value and advance the process.

From the foregoing, I wish to make the following observations:

a) – there is an imperative need to hold an EAC Extra-Ordinary Summit to address the impediment to the process; I will make this representation speedily to the Mediator and to the Chairman of the EAC Summit of the Heads of State.

b) – From the written responses to the proposals, I have developed an impression that there is a general agreement on the substantive issues. There are disagreements on the modalities of the implementation. Therefore, I am persuaded that the four thematic areas remain the basis for the next dialogue session;

c) – I wish to thank all the participants who honoured my invitation. Your presence here is a testimony of your commitment to engage to end the suffering of the people of Burundi. I also wish to thank the Special Envoys and Special representatives for the expression of their total support to the process.

You will shortly hear from the Facilitation the date and venue of the next encounter. Meanwhile, travel safely back to your destinations and keep the spirit of unity and reconciliation alive.

God Bless Burundi, God bless Africa!