

United Nations

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Mr. Pascal Nyabenda, President of the National Assembly, accompanied by the two Deputy Speakers, the Hon. Agathon Rwaswa and the Hon. Jocky-Chantal Nkurunziza; the Hon. Edouard Nduwimana, Ombudsman; representatives of the opposition parties; representatives of the Office of the Special Envoy of the United Nations H.E. Mr. Michel Kafando; H.E. Mr. Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region; H.E. Mr. Basile Ikouebe, Special Representative of the African Union for the Great Lakes Region; representatives of the private sector, civil society and the diplomatic community; bilateral and multilateral donors; and the UN Country Team.

I want to thank Ambassador Albert Shingiro, the Permanent Representative of Burundi and UN Resident Coordinator Garry Conille and his team for their efforts to organize my program.

My visit to Burundi confirmed the impression that the **upcoming elections in 2020** are already absorbing considerable attention. I considered it important to hear the views of a wide range of interlocutors on the electoral process, given its implications for peacebuilding.

The authorities informed me that all instruments and processes required for a successful conduct of the elections are in place and that Burundi will finance the elections with its own resources. The electoral code was adopted by the members of the national assembly, including the president of the new opposition party *Congrès National pour la Liberté (CNL)*, Agathon Rwaswa, by 105 votes out of 108. The authorities reiterated that H.E. President Pierre Nkurunziza would not stand as a candidate in the elections. With regard to preparations for the peaceful conduct of the elections, the need for technical support, for instance in the areas of police training and security sector reform, was mentioned. I was informed that the independent national election commission (CENI) would invite observers from international and regional organizations to the elections.

The interlocutors I met from some of the opposition parties reiterated their intent to participate in the 2020 elections. They highlighted the advanced state of preparations for the elections and underscored the need for an inclusive process. A number of interlocutors voiced concerns over difficulties encountered by members of



international peace and security. During my visit, no security incidents were reported and the streets of Bujumbura were busy with people and activity.

However, a number of interlocutors voiced concerns about alleged violent incidents and human rights violations that are not properly investigated and prosecuted.

The Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights in Bujumbura was closed at the end of February at the request of the authorities. The Minister for Human Rights, Social Affairs and Gender confirmed Burundi's readiness to engage in technical cooperation with international human rights bodies and highlighted the ongoing work on the implementation of the recommendations from the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Burundi in the Human Rights Council. The National Independent Commission for Human Rights (CNIDH), under new leadership since April 2019, expressed its readiness to cooperate with relevant partners in order to promote and protect the full spectrum of human rights in Burundi.

My visit also offered the opportunity to follow up on the **socio-economic dialogue** with the Government and Burundi's international partners, which has been a priority for the Configuration over the past years. The authorities expressed their satisfaction with the successful outcome of the high-level side event on nutrition organized by the Ministry of Finance with bilateral and multilateral partners in the margins of the Spring Meetings of the World Bank and the IMF in Washington D.C. in April. Regarding the implementation of Burundi's National Development Plan 2018-2027 (NDP), the authorities expressed the intent to mobilize external resources to complement internal funds and indicated that preparations for a substantive dialogue on the NDP with bilateral and multilateral partners were underway.

A field trip to a project supported by the Peacebuilding Fund, which is jointly implemented by UNWOMEN, IOM and UNDP, highlighted the important work carried out by a group of **women mediators** to mitigate tensions and resolve conflicts at the community level. The powerful testimonies shared by these women showed the importance of accompanying mediation efforts with income-generating activities in order to strengthen resilience and empower women to x e opport



- (3) I encourage Member States, UN partners and Burundi to work together to create a conducive environment for the **full realization of all human rights**, including by exploring opportunities for further engagement and support at all levels.
- (4) Initiatives to promote **reconciliation and dialogue** among all stakeholders, including at the community level, play a crucial role in reducing tensions during the electoral period, in strengthening resilience beyond the elections and in helping to preserve the gains achieved through the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation agreement. Building on insights gained from programs such as the women mediators' network, support to local-level initiatives, in particular with regard to the empowerment of women and youth, should be continued and expanded.
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