

REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL AND SPOKESPERSON OF THE GOVERNMENT

COMMUNIQUE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF BURUNDI FOLLOWING THE ACCUSATIONS BY THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ON 19 JANUARY 2017

- 1.** The Government of Burundi has observed in recent days a resurgence of an active campaign by some of its partners against its republican institutions, as well as against the people of Burundi who democratically set these republican institutions up through democratic, transparent and peaceful elections.
- 2.** It was with a mixture of surprise and indignation that the Government of Burundi learned of the European Parliament's Resolution 2017/2508 of 19 January 2017 alleging the continuation of "human rights violations in Burundi". The Resolution goes even further in addressing the decisions taken by both Houses of the Burundian Parliament in total disregard for the sovereignty of the people who elected its members and to whom they entrusted the duty to pass the best legislation for them.
- 3.** The Government of Burundi noted the strange coincidence and resemblance of the European Parliament's communiqué with the report released yesterday by Human Rights Watch, an NGO which for many years and even before the 2015 elections has kept publishing false and damning reports on Burundi solely in order to please the interest groups on which it is financially depending.
- 4.** This resolution is based on a biased report released by FIDH, another NGO visibly serving the same cause and manipulation, a report drafted jointly with the Burundian NGO, Ligue ITEKA, which is currently deleted from the register of Burundian civil society organizations by judicial decision for its very active role in spreading lies about Burundi and its institutions.

5. All this misinformation and demonization campaign against Burundi is actively covered by foreign media particularly the French television channel France24 which has distinguished itself and continues to do so through its propaganda aiming at supporting destabilizing elements against Burundi which has started long before the so-called third term of President Nkurunziza.

It will be remembered that, as early as December 2, 2011, a grotesque fabricated story of the Franco-Rwandan journalist Pauline Simonet was broadcasted by France24 propaganda on an imaginary rebellion against Burundi directed by a certain General Moïse who was only a simple Rwandan-speaking Congolese joker who commanded his troops in English and Kinyarwanda, a funny thing from a General from a French-speaking country that is Burundi.

Since then, this medium has constantly accompanied, supported and given its media coverage to all the groups that tried to destabilize the Burundian institutions. The Burundian public opinion was deeply shocked by the catalytic role that journalists of France24 played alongside the insurgents in the insurgency neighbourhoods.

6. It should be recalled that it is the European Parliament, under the influence of parliamentarians from some of the EU member states with links and historical disputes with Burundi, particularly Belgium, in complicity with some foreign NGOs and media sharing the same interests with Belgium that convinced the European Union to decide unjustly to suspend its cooperation with our country.

7. The Government of Burundi is used to the fact that, on the eve of any important event, the above mentioned coalition publishes and spreads false and overwhelming reports on Burundi through the influence of some interest groups.

It is therefore no surprise that a fortnight before the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, HRW's report and the communiqué by the European Parliament, as well as the accompanying media hype are intended to deceive or attempt to influence the potential decisions. The Government of Burundi strongly condemns this attitude.

8. The Government of Burundi regrets that the European Parliament is totally out of step with the positive developments in the politico-security situation throughout the country. This reality was confirmed, exactly one year ago, by eminent personalities who visited Burundi in 2016, namely five Heads of State and Governments mandated

by the African Union, members of the UN Security Council, not to mention the outgoing Secretary General of the United Nations Ban Ki Moon himself.

9. Thanks the strengthening of the quadrilogy, i.e. the collaboration between the population, the judiciary, the police and the administration, the situation of human rights in Burundi has significantly improved and peace and security prevails throughout the national territory, in spite of some challenges to be overcome, in Burundi and in all the other countries of the world threatened by terrorism.

10. It is also surprising that this Resolution of the European Parliament ignores the presidential measure taken on the eve of the celebration of the New Year's Day 2017 to release 2,500 convicted for various offenses including those who have been convicted of criminal offences committed during the insurrectional movements organized since 2014.

11. To ignore such an event when it comes to discussing human rights only reinforces the feeling that the European Parliament's sources of information are biased. If the European Parliament is interested in the issue of human rights in Burundi, the Government of Burundi urges them to establish permanent contact with more reliable official sources that are always with the population, such as the Burundian Parliament which should be their privileged partner

12. Regarding the European Parliament's concern over the recent adoption of two bills that impose controls on the actions of national and international NGOs in the country, the Government of Burundi would like to remind the European Parliament that these texts are part of the protection and promotion of the fundamental rights of citizens. The Government through its structures is the first to know the wishes and the aspirations of its citizens and the first to respond before any other partner organization.

13. Moreover, the Government of Burundi finds it inappropriate that such a Resolution is taken at the time when everyone, the African Union and Burundi in the lead, welcomes the happy ending over the allowances of Burundians soldiers involved in the peacekeeping mission in Somalia, allowances unfairly frozen for almost a year.

14. The Government of Burundi reiterates its commitment and determination to pursue its policy of reconciliation and reconstruction of the country, and to this end the issue of human rights will remain at the heart of its concerns.

15. In conclusion, the Government of Burundi urges the people of Burundi to remain calm in the face of this renewed provocation, to consolidate unity, peace and security, while continuing to take good care of the property of those who are still in exile, whom the Government asks to return to their native land to enjoy regained peace and contribute to the development of their country.

Done at Bujumbura, January 25, 2017

Philippe NZOBONARIBA

Secretary-General and Spokesman
of the Government.-