

Speech by H.E. Mr Marc Pecsteen de Buytsverve, Ambassador,
Permanent Representative

to the United Nations Security Council

Briefing on Burundi

New York, 14 June 2019

Mr President,

First of all, we would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Taranco, African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security Chergui and the Chairperson of the Burundi Configuration of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission for their briefings this afternoon.

Our last intervention on Wednesday in the context of the Burundi configuration of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission provided us with the opportunity to reiterate our concerns with regard to the human rights and socio-economic situation in Burundi but also to reiterate our readiness for dialogue with the Burundian authorities.

During this briefing, we would like to highlight the importance of the 2020 elections.

The electoral process must be transparent and sufficiently inclusive if challenges are to be avoided in its aftermath. This process should include a consensual roadmap in which the main actors agree on the preparations and modalities for the elections, as well as on the conditions necessary to ensure peaceful elections. I would now like to seize this opportunity to make a three-fold appeal to all Burundian actors: 1. credible elections require the political and media space to not be closed off in advance, 2. the elections must not be boycotted, and 3. they must be independently observed. Inclusiveness also implies the participation of the many peaceful political actors who have gone into exile in recent years. Respect for the letter and spirit of the Arusha Agreement is, of course, a prerequisite for any solution.

If these conditions are met, I think it is important to reflect on how we can support this process, both bilaterally and at UN level. In this context, Belgium welcomes the adoption of the new electoral code with broad political support and the recent announcement by the Independent National Electoral Commission that it will invite international and regional observers to attend the 2020 electoral process.

Belgium is convinced that, as the 2020 elections approach, there is an opportunity to find a lasting solution to some of the causes and consequences of the 2015 crisis, which are unfortunately still present today.

We welcome Uganda, which continues to play a key role as a mediator through President Museveni. We are confident that Uganda will be able to take up and implement the recommendations of former facilitator Mkapa. We welcome the continued engagement of the Presidents of Kenya and Tanzania. The regional repercussions of the situation in Burundi - as reported by the group of experts - further highlight the need for high-level regional engagement.

The African Union also continues to play an important role in this matter. We believe that, in terms of mediation, the activities of the African Union and the guarantors of the Arusha Agreement could supplement and further strengthen those currently being undertaken by the East African Community.

In parallel, the United Nations and the Office of the Special Envoy for Burundi must continue to support the efforts of the sub-region and the region. The UN remains a partner of Burundi and must do its utmost to help it resolve its political and socio-economic difficulties; this must be achieved through full cooperation and mutual respect. In this regard, Belgium welcomes the continued commitment and substantial work undertaken by the Special Envoy for Burundi. His mandate remains absolutely essential for leading and coordinating UN political support. We are now awaiting the UNSG's proposals on the possible roles of the UN in Burundi after consultations with key partners. In the meantime, the Security Council must continue to contribute to this debate .

Thank you for your attention.