



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **International Envoys Call for Restraint and Urge Resumption of Dialogue in Burundi**

**Nairobi, 12 August 2015** - The ongoing political impasse and instability in Burundi call for restraint, leadership, and vision from all concerned citizens of Burundi to prevent further violence. We condemn the recent attacks and commend those calling for calm. Following months of unrest and the controversial electoral process, the Burundian government can begin to restore credibility through engagement in an inclusive political dialogue with political parties, including opposition and the *Frondeurs* of the CNDD-FDD, and civil society.

The team of international special envoys, including the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General to the Great Lakes Region Said Djinnit, African Union Special Envoy Ibrahima Fall, U.S. Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region of Africa Thomas Perriello, European Union Senior Coordinator for the Great Lakes Region Koen Vervaeke, and Belgian Special Envoy for the African Great Lakes Region Frank De Coninck call for an immediate end to violence, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the resumption of an inclusive political dialogue. They condemn the killing of General Adolph Nshimirimana and the attack on human rights defender Pierre Claver Mbonimpa, journalist Esdras Ndikumana and others and call for those responsible to be held accountable in accordance with due process and the rule of law. Violence will not resolve Burundi's political crisis and will only further the instability. Calls for violence will be condemned and will discredit those individuals and parties that make them. The envoys call upon the Government of Burundi and other political parties to immediately recommit to a transparent, inclusive, and comprehensive political dialogue. Such a dialogue, to be credible and effective, must address foundational issues including respect for human rights, freedom of the press and other

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fundamental freedoms, and the need for improved and inclusive governance.

The envoys believe leadership by the East African Community (EAC), with the support of the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN) has been and continues to be vital for finding a peaceful, political solution for Burundi. The Envoys thank Uganda for its efforts to achieve a consensus way forward. They call for the international community to support engagement by the AU and all Guarantors of the Arusha Agreement to restore dialogue following the disputed electoral process. The National Assembly's decision last week to eliminate quotas ensuring ethnic and gender balance in its leadership committee indicate a disturbing intent by the ruling party to repeal one of the fundamental principles of peace and stability that enabled Burundi to emerge from protracted civil war. They call on all parties to recommit to the Arusha Agreement and its power-sharing provisions.

The crisis in Burundi continues to spill across borders, with over 200,000 people seeking refuge across the region. The latest numbers show 85,200 Burundian refugees in Tanzania, 71,600 in Rwanda, 28,300 in Uganda, 14,322 in the DRC, 7,000 in Kenya, and 3,000 in southern Africa. The Envoys commend these countries for their humanitarian contributions as hosts for refugees. A dialogue that brings about a political resolution to the instability in Burundi is the best route to encourage the safe return of refugees and prevent regional instability.

The Burundian government cannot afford to continue down a road marred by instability, division, extreme economic decline, and humanitarian crisis. Already one of the most fragile economies in the world, Burundi's economy has plummeted further in recent months and shows little sign that it can recover in the absence of a resolution to the political crisis. Donors have made clear that their willingness to continue partnering with the government is dependent on progress towards restoring the country's democratic credentials through a serious and inclusive dialogue. The Envoys urge the Burundian government to immediately seize the opportunity for dialogue and forge a new path for Burundi – agreed upon by all peaceful political parties, civil society, and the people of Burundi - with the support of the EAC, the AU, the UN and the international community.

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