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## **FINAL PRESS RELEASE OF THE JOINT SOLIDARITY MISSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS, AFRICAN UNION AND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION TO BURUNDI**

**Bujumbura, Burundi, 11 August 2018**

**The Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, UN-WOMEN, the African Union and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), in partnership for a solidarity and advocacy mission for Burundian women towards greater involvement of women in the current political dynamic, including the electoral process.**

The Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, UN-WOMEN, the African Union and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), through the Consultative Committee of the Women's Platform, comprising female members of the African Union Panel of the Wise (FemWise-Africa), the ICGLR Regional Women Forum and UN-Women, undertook a joint solidarity and advocacy mission to Burundi from 9 to 11 August 2018.

The aims of the mission were as follows: 1) to advocate for an inclusive electoral process; 2) to raise awareness among political leaders of the need for the full participation of women in both the political process and the peace process so that the concerns and priorities of women and young women are taken into account in accordance with the commitments entered into under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) concerning women and peace and security; and 3) to raise awareness of the repercussions of conflict on communities, in particular women and children.

The delegation met with various Burundian authorities, including the following:

- President of the Republic
- The First Lady
- Members of Parliament (Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister for Gender, Minister for Justice, Minister for the Interior and Minister for Youth)
- Diplomatic corps
- Female community leaders and female leaders in various sectors

The delegation delivered its message of solidarity to the women of Burundi gathered together at the Forum of Women and Girl Leaders on 10 August 2018, who expressed their deep gratitude to the mission for its advocacy to the Burundian authorities and welcomed the message that their African sisters had extended to them by way of solidarity.

The mission noted recent developments in Burundi, in particular the progress that had been made at the legal level, with a national constitution that enshrined equality in many of its provisions. A minimum quota of 30 per cent of high-level decision-making positions and elective office posts are reserved for women. At the political level, a national gender policy has been adopted and action plans for its implementation are reviewed every five years.

At this crucial period when the country is preparing for general elections in 2020, the mission was very much appreciated.

The key issues raised, both with the Burundian authorities and with women leaders from all sides of the spectrum, concerned the general context of Burundi with regard to current political dynamics and increased involvement of women in politics; the progress and challenges that flow from that involvement; the preparation of women for the electoral process; strategies and effective means of mobilizing women to participate in public life; legal reforms currently under way; and community initiatives to enhance the status of women to enable them to play a full part in the social and economic life of the country.

The mission welcomes this engagement and expresses its most sincere wishes that it be fully implemented so that equality and gender equality can be advanced across the various political sectors and processes. Furthermore, the mission highlights the engaged and voluntarist preparedness of women leaders to work in networks and in partnership with young people and with men, and to strengthen their capacity for increased participation in the forthcoming elections.

The mission expressed its deep gratitude to the Government of Burundi for the warm welcome which it received and the fruitful exchanges which it had with its authorities, as well as for the engagement which they undertook in supporting the political involvement of women.

The mission also welcomed the commitment made by the First Lady to work with all Burundian women to raise the level of well-being of women and girls within the framework of national reconstruction.

The mission also welcomed the work that had been accomplished in solidarity with Burundian women in terms of advocating for their involvement in the current dialogue and political process in Burundi.

The mission expressed its deep gratitude for the enthusiasm and support demonstrated by Burundian women leaders in addressing the challenges they encounter in increasing the involvement of women in politics, since the independence.

The mission has also committed to continuing its efforts to advocate in favour of the political participation of Burundian women and of all women in the Great Lakes region.

The mission is launching an appeal to the international community to mobilize the resources necessary to provide technical and financial support to the women of Burundi in their advancement.