



# Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

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 Tuesday, 19 February 2019, 3 p.m.  
 New York

*Provisional*

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<i>President:</i>	Mr. Ndong Mba . . . . .	(Equatorial Guinea)
<i>Members:</i>	Belgium . . . . .	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
	China . . . . .	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire . . . . .	Mr. Moriko
	Dominican Republic . . . . .	Mr. Singer Weisinger
	France . . . . .	Mr. Michon
	Germany . . . . .	Mr. Schulz
	Indonesia . . . . .	Mr. Djani
	Kuwait . . . . .	Mr. Almunayekh
	Peru . . . . .	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland . . . . .	Mr. Mielus
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Polyanskiy
	South Africa . . . . .	Mr. Van Shalkwyk
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Allen
	United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Cohen

## Agenda

The situation in Burundi

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation in Burundi**

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Burundi to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi; Her Excellency Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; and His Excellency Mr. Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Kafando.

**Mr. Kafando** (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to once again brief the Security Council on the situation in Burundi. Before doing so, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month.

My briefing will focus on the main developments in Burundi and in the region since my last briefing (see S/PV.8408), in particular the activities that I have carried out on behalf of the Secretary-General, as well as the prospects for resolving the political crisis, only 16 months before the holding of general elections, including the presidential election. Since my briefing last November, the situation in Burundi has been marked by the following major developments.

On the political front, on 22 December 2018, President Pierre Nkurunziza reiterated his decision not to seek another mandate in 2020. The new opposition party, the Congrès national pour la liberté, whose request for official recognition was made by Mr. Agathon Rwaswa on 14 September 2018, was finally approved by the Government on 14 February. That decision is a step in the right direction and could help open up the

political space. I encourage the Government to continue in that direction and urge it to be more inclusive, in particular in the context of ongoing discussions on the adoption of a new electoral code for the 2020 elections. The platform of the Conseil national pour le respect de l'Accord d'Arusha pour la paix et la réconciliation au Burundi et la restauration de l'état de droit continues to be undermined by various defections. Opposition parties have reiterated their call for the African Union and the United Nations to take over the inter-Burundian dialogue process.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights believes that the human rights situation remains worrisome, in the light of the reports it receives from Burundi. The humanitarian situation has improved since 2017, except in some parts of the country, in particular in the eastern and north-eastern border provinces. However, approximately 1.5 million people remain threatened by food insecurity due to persistent socioeconomic difficulties. According to United Nations estimates, as of 31 December 2018, there were 140,000 displaced persons and more than 347,000 Burundian refugees still living in neighbouring countries. It should be noted that that number is down from the 380,000 refugees reported in November.

The Government of Burundi and the United Nations country team signed a \$784.4 million cooperation agreement on 25 January as part of the United Nations development assistance framework for the period 2019-2023, of which 46 per cent is immediately available, thereby cementing the continued support of the United Nations for the Government's priority programmes, which are outlined in its national development plan. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees launched a \$296 million appeal on 9 February to assist refugees in camps in Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I visited Burundi from 20 to 29 January with the intention of discussing with President Nkurunziza and Burundian officials the conclusions of the Security Council meeting held on 21 November 2018 and reaffirming, on the eve of the Summit of the East African Community (EAC) Heads of State, the support of the United Nations for the inter-Burundian dialogue process. Regrettably, such discussions could not take place. However, as I was in Bujumbura, I took the opportunity to interact with members of the international community and the diplomatic corps. My interlocutors welcomed the encouraging security

developments in the country, despite the recurrence of violent border incidents reported by the media and some neighbouring countries.

I then visited Kampala on 31 January for a working visit with President Museveni, mediator of the inter-Burundian dialogue. That meeting enabled me to reiterate to President Museveni the support of the Secretary-General, as well as that of the Security Council, for the inter-Burundian dialogue process led by the region. Above all, I noted his willingness and commitment to achieve inter-Burundian dialogue at all costs, as well as his determination to contribute to easing the crisis in Burundi and the tensions among the countries of the region.

The day after my visit with President Museveni, on 1 February, the Arusha Summit opened, during which President Paul Kagame of Rwanda succeeded President Museveni as Chair of the East African Community. In addition to other agenda items, the Summit took note of the facilitator's final report on the inter-Burundian dialogue but decided that the leaders of the region would consult each other on it later. The facilitator, whom I met on 4 February, informed me that he had completed his facilitation work and that it was now up to the mediator to take over the process. He also confirmed that consultations were ongoing among the Heads of State of the subregion.

Since the Ordinary Summit meeting of the East African Community Heads of State, Burundi has renewed its confidence in the mediator, who has already begun initial consultations with his peers in the subregion. Council members will recall that, in his most recent report to the Security Council (S/2018/1028), the Secretary-General proposed various options on the role of the United Nations in Burundi, in close consultation with international partners, and in particular with East African countries, including the country concerned, Burundi, not to mention the African Union, whose presence and participation in today's important meeting I welcome. A new deal was proposed by the EAC Summit and the Presidents of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda were appointed to conduct the mediation. I intend to contact them again to find out the details of their new approach. The aim will be to reassess together the ways and means of helping the region to assist Burundi effectively in resolving the current political crisis.

In that regard, if it is their intention to adopt a press statement, I would like to suggest that Council members reiterate their encouragement for the efforts of the region and the full support of the Secretary-General for the mediation. It is vital that the mediation process ensure that the facilitator receives support and assistance in conducting his mission. Nonetheless, all such proposals for support must have only one objective, namely, that is for the inclusive inter-Burundian dialogue to remain the only viable option for a lasting settlement of the political crisis and the holding of elections in 2020, in a peaceful environment and in the letter and spirit of the Arusha Agreement.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Kafando for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Mohammed.

**Ms. Mohammed:** At the outset, I wish to reiterate our congratulations to you, Sir, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month and to express our sincere admiration for your able leadership in guiding the work of this important United Nations organ to deliver constructive outcomes. Let me assure you that you have our full support and cooperation. I would also like to thank you for convening today's meeting and giving us an opportunity to share the views of the African Union (AU) on the situation in Burundi. Let me also take this opportunity to thank His Excellency Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, for his comprehensive briefing.

As all are aware, the African Union attaches great importance to the restoration of peace and stability in Burundi and has been very active in supporting the mediation efforts led by the East African Community. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the AU's deep appreciation to President Yoweri Museveni, in his capacity as mediator, and to former President Benjamin Mkapa, facilitator of the of the inter-Burundian political dialogue — as expressed by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union at its just-concluded summit — for their relentless efforts in assisting the Burundian parties to find a consensual and lasting solution and agree on a road map for the holding of credible elections in 2020.

Nevertheless, the general situation and ensuing economic crisis, which continue to have an impact on the people of Burundi, remains a preoccupation for the African Union. The AU supports the need for an

inclusive dialogue through the Inter-Burundi dialogue process, which has yet to yield the desired dividends. Consequently, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission continues to urge all Burundian actors to demonstrate a spirit of compromise, while stressing that inclusive dialogue remains the only way to enable Burundi to sustainably overcome the current challenges and maintain national cohesion.

It is in that context that, from 5 to 7 November 2018, the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security and the former President of the Transition of the Central African Republic, Her Excellency Ms. Catherine Samba-Panza, visited Burundi in order to explore, among other things, ways and means for the African Union to support Burundi in the preparations for the elections scheduled for 2020. The African Union continues its support for the East African Community as it works towards unblocking the stalemate in the inter-Burundi dialogue, and urges all Burundian actors to demonstrate a spirit of compromise. Against that background, allow me to focus my intervention on the following four key points.

First, concerning the political context, the Government has commenced preparations for the elections by establishing, on 31 August 2018, the Independent National Electoral Commission in accordance with the Burundian electoral code, adopting an electoral code and establishing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, made up of 13 members, as called for by the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement of August 2000. Following that level of preparation, the Assembly, at its recent meeting, expressed appreciation to President Pierre Nkurunziza and thanked him for his declaration not to run for re-election during the 2020 presidential election, while urging the Government and the political parties to work together to ensure a credible electoral process.

Secondly, with regard to the security situation, it should be recalled that the situation has remained relatively stable overall, with intermittent skirmishes reported along the border separating Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo between national forces and unidentified armed men.

Thirdly, concerning the humanitarian and socioeconomic situation, it has presented some challenges over the past reporting period, especially in the wake of displacements in the region, as we just heard. That is compounded by economic recession. While hundreds of Burundian refugees were voluntarily

repatriated from the Nduta and Mtendeli camps in Tanzania in 2018, many still remain in doubt over their final return from their camps to Burundi.

Fourthly, with regard to the human rights situation, The African Union continues to maintain its human rights observers and military experts in the country to monitor the day-to-day situation on the ground. Plans are under way to increase the number of human rights officers and military experts, which is critical given that African Union human rights officers and military experts are the only foreign observers who have been allowed to operate in the country.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate the African Union's commitment to continue supporting all efforts aimed at finding a lasting, peaceful and consensual solution to the situation in Burundi. The AU encourages the Government and the opposition groups to intensify efforts towards reaching the conclusion of a consensual and inclusive agreement that is consistent with the spirit and content of Arusha Agreement of 2000. We further encourage the Government of Burundi to continue its preparations for the elections by putting in place relevant mechanisms and instruments in accordance with the Burundian electoral code for the conduct of transparent and peaceful elections in 2020.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Mohammed for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lauber.

**Mr. Lauber** (Switzerland): On behalf of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), I thank you, Sir, for inviting me to brief the Security Council and for the excellent cooperation between the Council and the configuration. As per established practice, the following statement has been approved by the members of the PBC configuration, including the country concerned — Burundi.

I previously had an opportunity to brief the Council on 21 November 2018 (see S/PV.8408) following my visit to Burundi earlier that month. The Burundi configuration convened shortly thereafter, on 26 November 2018. In addition to receiving a comprehensive report of my visit, the configuration heard briefings on the United Nations peacebuilding engagement and refugee returns to Burundi. The Peacebuilding Support Office informed the configuration about its support for the socioeconomic dimension and Peacebuilding Fund funding for projects in support of the role of women



and youth in peacebuilding efforts. The Regional Refugee Coordinator of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Nairobi, Ms. Catherine Wiesner, indicated in her briefing to the configuration that refugee returns to Burundi will possibly peak in 2019, with more than 100,000 returnees. She noted that an innovative cross-border project supported by the Peacebuilding Fund and implemented by the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Development Programme and UNHCR, in coordination with the Governments of Tanzania and Burundi, had improved co-existence among returnees, refugees and host communities in targeted areas, including through livelihood activities to reduce socioeconomic pressures.

However, she drew attention to the fact that the Burundi regional refugee response plan, designed to assist refugees in neighbouring countries, is among the least-funded appeals in the world. Unfortunately, three months later, that observation is still correct. The challenge posed by severe underfunding remains acute. Funding is also required to support the joint refugee return and reintegration plan, an integrated response designed to assist refugee returnees in Burundi by addressing their immediate and longer-term reintegration needs. Members of the configuration commended the critical assistance provided by UNHCR for the voluntary return of refugees and underlined the need to respect international standards in order to facilitate the conditions necessary for the sustainable reintegration of returnees.

Furthermore, the members of the configuration remain committed to drawing the attention of bilateral, regional and international partners to the persistent need for support in reducing vulnerabilities, strengthening resilience and improving disaster preparedness and response in Burundi. They also agree on the need to continue supporting the ongoing efforts towards national reconciliation and helping to preserve the gains achieved through the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement.

Finally, members of the configuration underlined the important supporting role of the East African Community (EAC) in the run-up to the 2020 elections in Burundi. Free, inclusive and democratic elections are most likely to prevent violence and unrest and produce an outcome that will be perceived as legitimate inside and outside of Burundi.

A number of significant developments occurred since I last had an opportunity to brief the Council; some of them were already mentioned by the Special Envoy and by the observer of the African Union. According to the information from the ground, the security situation has remained generally calm since the previous briefing to the Security Council, held in November.

At the recent EAC Summit in Arusha, former President Mkapa submitted his report on the EAC-led inter-Burundian dialogue process. The configuration has always considered its role as complementary and supportive to the ongoing political processes at different levels. I want to take this opportunity to thank former President Mkapa for his tremendous efforts.

On 25 January, the Minister of Finance, Budget and Economic Development of Burundi and the United Nations Resident Coordinator jointly signed the United Nations development assistance framework for Burundi for the period from 2019 to 2023. On 1 February, the President of Burundi, His Excellency Pierre Nkurunziza, officially launched the localization strategy for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the presence of Ministers, State authorities, local leaders and international partners. I encourage bilateral and multilateral partners and the Government of Burundi to continue their dialogue on the implementation of those objectives, as well as for the resumption of assistance.

In December 2018, the Government requested that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights terminate its activities in the country and withdraw its staff. Human rights are an important element of peacebuilding; peaceful and resilient societies are an essential part of sustainable development. Stakeholders need to continue supporting the authorities in Burundi on their path towards building capacity for the protection and promotion of the full range of human rights, including civil and political, as well as social, economic and cultural rights.

The preparations for the 2020 elections already seem to absorb much of the energy and attention of the authorities, as well as many other stakeholders in Burundi. As we move closer to those elections, I invite the Government of Burundi and the political parties to work together to create the conditions for the next elections to be inclusive, free, democratic and peaceful. In that regard, I welcome the news from Bujumbura that the Minister of the Interior of Burundi gave approval

of the new political party, the Congrès national pour la liberté, of Agathon Rwasa, who is also the current Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly.

Meanwhile, the persistent challenges in the socioeconomic area shall remain at the core of the configuration's attention for the current year. The national development plan, issued by the Government of Burundi, provides an opportunity for Burundi and its bilateral and multilateral partners to engage in a strategic and substantive exchange on the plan's implementation, as does the recently approved development assistance framework. The alignment between the national development plan, the national priorities of the development assistance framework and the SDGs provides the basis for strategic and coherent engagement among all stakeholders towards the common objective of building resilience, eliminating poverty and reducing inequality and vulnerabilities. I encourage the Government of Burundi and its partners to engage in an open and substantive strategic dialogue on the implementation of the plan, followed by sector-specific discussions on concrete projects.

The Burundi configuration will pursue its discussions and activities in the coming months on the priorities that I have outlined. Allow me to conclude with the following recommendations.

First, the Government of Burundi, political parties and other stakeholders should work together closely, with the support of the Member States of the subregion, and build on previous efforts in order to create an enabling environment for free, inclusive, democratic and peaceful elections in 2020. The configuration stands ready to support Burundi and its neighbours in all possible ways in that effort.

Secondly, Burundi and its international partners should keep the focus on mid- and long-term socioeconomic development, even as the preparations for the 2020 elections increasingly move to the centre of attention. I reiterate my invitation to the Government of Burundi and its partners to enter into a strategic conversation on how the implementation of the national development plan can foster mutually beneficial, people-centred and innovative forms of engagement.

Thirdly, the international community should remain responsive to the importance of providing adequate assistance to help address the urgent needs of the people of Burundi and reduce vulnerability, which remains high in spite of improvements compared

to the previous year. With its support, bilateral and multilateral partners can contribute to a conducive environment for peaceful and inclusive elections.

Fourthly, the PBC Burundi configuration should continue supporting the ongoing process of national reconciliation and work with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, among others.

The PBC Burundi configuration remains committed to supporting the Government of Burundi and its partners in those areas, with a continued focus on the socioeconomic dimension, particularly on the implementation of the national development plan.

I thank the Council for its interest and continuous support for the configuration.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Lauber for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

**Mr. Michon** (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to warmly thank Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, for his informative briefing and personal commitment to the matter at hand. I also thank the Swiss Ambassador, Mr. Jürg Lauber, who is doing extremely useful work as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. I also thank Ms. Fatima Mohammad, Permanent Observer of the African Union, for her important statement.

Today I want to focus on three points: first, the preparation of the 2020 elections; secondly, the human rights situation; and, thirdly, the role of the international community in supporting Burundi.

First, I will address the elections in 2020. France would like to welcome the recognition last week of the Congrès national pour la liberté, led by Agathon Rwasa, as a political party, which allows it to participate in the upcoming elections. That is a step in the right direction and confirms the approach initiated by President Nkurunziza last June in committing to not stand for re-election.

We are indeed convinced that Burundi will find its way back to stability by holding free and inclusive elections in 2020, in accordance with the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement. It is now time for Burundi to prepare, without delay, for those elections in the best possible way. The positive momentum that has

been kick-started must now be maintained by ensuring that all political parties have fair and equitable access to the elections. The democratic space must be preserved and open to all, and civil and political rights must be respected to allow for a peaceful debate.

To that end, I encourage the Burundian authorities to continue the inter-Burundian dialogue, which is a key dialogue between the authorities and the opposition. In that regard, I would like to acknowledge the personal involvement of the facilitator mandated by the East African Community, former President Mkapa, whose determination to stay on course deserves to be commended. We must build on the work he has done and find ways together to continue his efforts.

Secondly, with respect to human rights, France respects Burundi's sovereignty but remains particularly vigilant and expects Burundi to take additional and concrete measures to respect human rights. After the unfortunate closure of the Burundi office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, we wish to reiterate our call on the authorities of Burundi to engage in fuller cooperation with the United Nations human rights protection mechanisms and to fight impunity. We stand ready to support the Burundian authorities in the resumption of dialogue with United Nations entities.

France is closely monitoring the humanitarian situation and the fate of internally displaced persons and refugees. It is important that refugee returns take place on a voluntary basis and in a safe and dignified manner, in accordance with the principles of international humanitarian law. We count on the Burundian authorities to ensure that refugee returns take place in the best possible conditions and we are ready to assist them in so doing.

Finally, the international community must remain fully mobilized to support the people of Burundi. Next year's elections will be a crucial and sensitive time. We must not abandon Burundi in midstream. It is up to the East African Community and the African Union to continue their work to provide the best possible support for the preparation of the elections and the emergence of the country from crisis. The United Nations will of course have an important role to play in providing the best possible support for the process at the regional level.

We are also increasingly concerned about the increase in violence in the Great Lakes region. We would like to express our concern at the possibility that

increased tensions could lead to further destabilization at the regional level. Nevertheless, we note the desire for peaceful change that has been expressed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the course of the recent presidential elections, which reflects a collective aspiration for greater stability and prosperity. We hope that this positive development will inspire all the countries of the region and we are ready to support them as they move in that direction.

In conclusion, we would like to say that the mission of Mr. Kafando and his team remains necessary and we encourage the Special Envoy to continue his consultative work in order to rapidly present the Council with options on the role that the United Nations could play in support of regional efforts.

**Mr. Moriko** (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation congratulates Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations and Chair of the Burundi Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, and Ambassador Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, for their briefings, which have provided the Council with an update on the sociopolitical and humanitarian situations in Burundi.

Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the improvement in the humanitarian situation in Burundi. However, it notes with regret the persistence of a deadlock in the political process in that country.

My country takes note of the resignation of Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, facilitator of the inter-Burundian political dialogue, after completing three years of work. We would like to acknowledge his commitment and express our appreciation for his efforts to promote peace and stability in that country. Côte d'Ivoire also welcomes the decision taken at the 20th Ordinary Summit of Heads of State of the East African Community, held in Arusha on 1 February, to maintain direct consultations between the Community and the protagonists of the Burundi crisis.

The humanitarian situation is marked by the ongoing voluntary return of Burundian refugees. Indeed, according to the Regional Coordinator of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, based in Nairobi, 100,000 people could be affected by the voluntary return in 2019. In that regard, my delegation welcomes the efforts made, in the context

of assistance and support for the voluntary refugee return programme, by the Burundian authorities, host countries, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the donor community. We encourage the donor community to increase its contributions to the financing of the humanitarian response plan in Burundi.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire calls on the international community to support the actions and initiatives of the East African Community to revitalize the inter-Burundian dialogue for national reconciliation and stability in the country. My country expresses its support for the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and reiterates its readiness to support all his efforts in the context of the inter-Burundian political dialogue.

**Mr. Cohen** (United States of America): I would like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, Mr. Michel Kafando, for today's briefing on the latest developments in Burundi, and to thank Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations and Chair of the Burundi Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, and Ambassador Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, for sharing the views of the African Union and the Burundi Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, respectively.

The United States is deeply concerned by the stalled status of the inter-Burundian political dialogue led by the East African Community (EAC), particularly by the manner in which the talks broke down. We express our deep appreciation to former President Benjamin Mkapa of the United Republic of Tanzania for his continuous efforts as the facilitator of the dialogue, which have been critical and trying to advance discussions on strengthening political stability in Burundi.

That work remains unfinished and we will need new regional champions. The United States urges the Government of Burundi, the EAC and the guarantors of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement to renew their commitment to finding consensus on a 2020 elections road map and preparing a free and fair electoral process that will allow all Burundian voters to participate in choosing their leaders. We urge the Government of Burundi to engage with these partners and view the Government's attendance at the EAC Heads of State Summit earlier this month as a potential sign of progress.

Burundi's 2020 elections are a unique opportunity that must not be missed. Despite our concerns about the dialogue, the United States continues to welcome President Nkurunziza's announcement that he would not seek a fourth term and will support his successor. A peaceful transition of power based on an inclusive electoral process will signal to the international community a renewed commitment to democracy and political stability.

In our view, a peaceful transition would become more likely if the Kayanza road map were expanded to include the input of all stakeholders, including women and youth, opposition and ruling party leaders, civil society representatives and prominent political activists, and if steps were taken to ensure that all eligible candidates are allowed to contest for the presidency. We welcome the Government of Burundi's recent steps on political party registration, which demonstrated that commitment.

Long-term political stability, however, cannot be achieved without respect for human rights. The United States is deeply concerned by the Government's decision to close the Burundi office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We fear that the further deterioration of respect for human rights will isolate the Government of Burundi in both regional and international bodies, which does not bode well for prospects for peace and security in the region. The United States urges the Government of Burundi to address persistent and reliable reports of illicit arms transfers, combatant recruitment and armed group activity in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo that are tied to Burundi.

We are particularly disturbed by reports that the Burundian military and the ruling party's youth militia have been active in South Kivu. We are also concerned about tensions between Burundi and Rwanda and reports of cross-border attacks by armed groups in these countries and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. No one wins from a proxy war in the Great Lakes.

The United States urges all parties to refrain from the use of violence and to respect territorial integrity. We encourage more cooperation among United Nations institutions working in the region, particularly the Office of the Special Envoy for Burundi, the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in



the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We call on this Council to support dialogue in the region and believe that regular briefings to the Council are essential to address rising tensions.

More than 58,000 Burundian refugees have returned since the outbreak of violence in 2015. Food insecurity, poverty and their harassment by local officials to join the ruling party present major hurdles to voluntary repatriation for the nearly 350,000 Burundi in refugees who remain displaced. The United States encourages the Government of Burundi to continue collaborating with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to facilitate the voluntary, dignified and safe repatriation of its nationals, whose inclusion in the political process will strengthen and further legitimize the 2020 electoral process.

So many Burundians are desperate for basic services, but the Government's October 2018 suspension of some international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) continues to affect important programmes assisting the Burundian people. While the majority of NGOs have been reinstated, approximately 20 remain suspended and a handful have left the country. We urge the Government to lift all remaining suspensions to ensure the continuation of vital services to the Burundian people and to allow these NGOs unhindered access to deliver services.

Finally, we understand that the Government of Burundi objects to being included on the Council's agenda. We would like nothing more than to remove them from it. But the United States is deeply concerned by rising regional tensions, which are not just a war of words but of bullets, as well as by Burundi's increasing diplomatic isolation and deep domestic political divides. It would be irresponsible to disengage before 2020, and we urge our colleagues on the Council and our Burundian counterparts to put their collective effort into increasing productive dialogue and reducing the likelihood of violence on Burundi's path to peace, security and development.

**Mr. Van Shalkwyk** (South Africa): We thank former President Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi; Ambassador Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; and Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), for their important and insightful

briefings on the evolving situation in Burundi and for their unwavering commitment to the country.

South Africa fully supports the facilitation process led by the East African Community (EAC) in the spirit of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, with the support of the African Union and the United Nations. In this regard, the efforts of the mediator, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, and the facilitator, former President Benjamin Mkapa of the United Republic of Tanzania, is acknowledged and commended. We also commend the essential and valuable work of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, former President Kafando, as well as the Burundi configuration of the PBC, under the able leadership of Ambassador Lauber.

South Africa welcomes Burundi's participation in the summit of Heads of State of the East African Community and the African Union summit of 11 February. That participation is in line with our long-standing position on the importance of the role played by regional and continental bodies in the resolution of the impasse.

With the submission of the final report of former President Mkapa to the EAC, South Africa and the international community need to await direction from the leadership of the East African Community and the African Union in strengthening our commitment to helping Burundi, especially in view of the elections scheduled for 2020. South Africa supports a Burundi-led process that respects its sovereignty and that is within the parameters of the Constitution.

Any political impasse in Burundi can be addressed only through a fully inclusive dialogue. We therefore call on the international community to continue to support the initiatives of the EAC. We deplore any efforts, by any party, that seek to undermine or sidestep the Arusha accords. As South Africa, we are concerned with the current trajectory, which has overturned the 2000 Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi. As such, we implore the mediation process to revert to the principles of that Agreement.

South Africa calls on upon the Burundians to implement the principles of the 2000 Arusha accords. It is our view that the global ceasefire agreement flowed from those accords and that, as such, the two should be read together. South Africa stands ready to support the Government and the people of Burundi.

We encourage Burundi to work closely with the East African Community and the African Union to create an environment conducive to the holding of elections. In this regard, all Burundian parties need to demonstrate a spirit of cooperation in order to ensure peace and stability beyond 2020. South Africa welcomes the decision by the Government of Burundi to finance the elections with the country's own national budget.

With regard to the political developments in Burundi, we are encouraged by the continued stable security situation in the country. We would like to congratulate the Government of Burundi on having initiated the preparatory process for the elections, especially the establishment, on 31 August 2018, of an Independent National Electoral Commission, in keeping with the Burundian electoral code.

We commend Burundi's contribution to peace and security through its deployment of troop contingents. Burundi participates alongside other countries in United Nations and African Union peacekeeping missions with much success, with more than 6,000 Burundian men and women deployed in various peacekeeping operations, mostly in the Central African Republic and Somalia. We therefore call on the international community to support Burundi in strengthening its peacekeeping capacity, as it is of critical institutional value to the country. We would like to congratulate Burundi on its appointment to the African Union Peace and Security Council.

We note Burundi's adoption of a 10-year national development plan that provides direction on the way towards sustainable development by 2030. We urge the international community to do more to alleviate the socioeconomic challenges and humanitarian situation facing the people of Burundi and call on its partners to support the implementation of the national dialogue process for the benefit of the Burundian people. In that vein, we reiterate the call made by the AU during its thirty-second summit for the European Union to lift the unilateral sanctions imposed against the Republic of Burundi.

We encourage Burundi to continue to work towards the voluntary repatriation and dignified return of refugees. The gradual return of refugees is evidence of the improvement in the country's situation. To date approximately 210,000 refugees have returned voluntarily to Burundi. In 2018 alone, 58,262 Burundians returned, mainly from Tanzania, the Congo, Kenya

and Uganda. We call on the international community to support these efforts and in particular to provide assistance for the refugees' return and reintegration.

Finally, we appeal to the international community to support the Government and the EAC mediation process so as to lay the foundation for an environment that is conducive to the holding of democratic elections and support a peaceful transfer of power, in order to ensure peace and stability beyond 2020.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Michel Kafando, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, and Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, for their briefings on the evolving situation in Burundi. We listened with interest and gratitude to the report of Ambassador Jürg Lauber, the Permanent Representative of Switzerland and Chair of the country configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). We note the balanced approach that the Commission takes to Burundi, which is one of the reasons why the PBC continues to be a channel for trustworthy communication with Bujumbura. We believe that its initiatives for revitalizing cooperation with Burundians, with an emphasis on issues related to the country's socioeconomic development and re-establishing donors' trust, are what is needed.

Based on information we have received, including from Russian diplomats in Bujumbura, we have concluded that the situation in Burundi is calm and trending towards normalization. The improving security situation has been reflected in a significant drop in the level of violence, including the attacks on civilian infrastructure by the radical opposition. We should also note that the process of refugees' gradual return to Burundi from neighbouring States has begun, as my colleagues have already indicated.

We view the constitutional referendum that took place on 17 May last year, in an atmosphere of calm and with the participation of an overwhelming majority of Burundi's population, as a key event in the country's political situation. We should remind the Council in that regard that a majority of voters — 73.26 per cent — expressed support for changing the Constitution and that the referendum was preceded by a democratic and transparent information campaign.

The Russian Federation believes that the 2020 presidential and parliamentary elections are a domestic

issue for Burundi and that any outside interference in them would be completely unacceptable. We urge the authorities and the opposition to refrain from any negative rhetoric and to focus on preparing for the electoral cycle, especially given that despite the alarmist forecasts of various members of the opposition and Western experts, the acting President, Pierre Nkurunziza, has declared that he will not be participating in the election.

Concerning the problems in promoting the inter-Burundian dialogue, we would like to point out that assigning responsibility for them to one side alone would be counterproductive and even dangerous. We have been closely following and supporting the East African Community's efforts aimed at relaunching a direct negotiation process between the Burundian parties. We also welcome any similar efforts made with Bujumbura's consent and for the good of Burundi.

Our overall view is that the situation in Burundi does not pose any threats to international peace and security, which gives us good reason to doubt whether it makes sense to keep Burundi as an item on the Council's overburdened agenda. We think that keeping the Council's attention focused on Burundi is becoming counterproductive and is basically there as a convenient excuse for the unreconciled opposition to complicate the country's internal political processes.

**Mr. Djani** (Indonesia): I would like to join others in thanking Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, my colleague Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), and my sister Ambassador, Fatima Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations. Their briefings have provided us a clearer picture of the situation in Burundi. I also welcome my brother Ambassador, Albert Shingiro, Permanent Representative of Burundi, to the Chamber.

My statement today will centre on three issues — the progress being made on the situation in Burundi, humanitarian assistance in the country and Burundi's role in maintaining peace and security in the region.

First, we note that the briefers mentioned that the situation on the ground in Burundi remains calm, which is a good sign that we hope will continue. We have seen the negative impact of political impasses on Burundi's

economic and social situation in the past, leading to increases in unemployment and the cost of basic services and commodities, which in turn have had a negative effect on the population. Nevertheless, there has been political progress that should not go unnoticed. Today's briefings and the Secretary-General's November report (S/2018/1028), for example, have noted improvements in the situation on the ground. Efforts made by the leadership of the Burundian Government, such as the announcement that the President will not seek re-election in 2020, have also had a positive effect. As we look forward to those elections, we also welcome the Burundian Government's initiative in taking ownership and full financial responsibility for them. We encourage the authorities to continue creating an environment conducive to democratic processes. However, the Secretary-General's report makes it clear that there is still work to be done. We urge the Government of Burundi to work together with the United Nations mechanisms on the ground.

We also want to acknowledge the efforts of the African Union and the East African Community (EAC), and we note the submission of the final report on the EAC-led inter-Burundian dialogue process at the recent EAC summit in Arusha. Of course, we encourage close cooperation between Africa's regional and subregional organizations and United Nations entities, including the Peacebuilding Commission. In that connection, we welcome the recommendations made by the Chair of the Burundi configuration of the PBC that adequate assistance should continue to be provided to help address the Burundian people's urgent needs and reduce their vulnerability, and that Burundi and its international partners should continue to focus on mid- and long-term socioeconomic development. At the end of the day, socioeconomic development is closely tied to political development, and we look forward to further progress in that regard.

Secondly, our priority should be to increase humanitarian assistance to Burundi and support its economic and social development, including through the work of the PBC and the Peacebuilding Fund. We note from the *Burundi Regional Refugee Response Plan 2019-2020* of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees that refugee returns to Burundi will peak in 2019, with a projection of more than 100,000 returnees, compared to 58,262 in 2018. We also note that the innovative cross-border project supported by the Peacebuilding Fund has improved

peaceful coexistence among returnees, refugees and host communities in the targeted areas. It is nonetheless disheartening to hear that the Refugee Response Plan is among the lowest-funded appeals in the world, as Ambassador Lauber mentioned in his briefing. I urge countries to continue their support and to deliver on their commitments made to Burundi in consultation with that country, including commitments made through the Peacebuilding Fund, as well as their support for Burundi's 10-year national development plan, which has provided a road map for reaching sustainable development by 2030.

Lastly, we recognize Burundi's contribution to the peace and security effort in the region. Like Indonesia, Burundi is a participant in peacekeeping operations in Africa, contributing more than 6,000 peacekeepers to United Nations and African Union missions and thereby demonstrating that it is a responsible member of the United Nations. We also want to congratulate Burundi on being elected a member of the African Union Peace and Security Council for a term of three years, starting this year. Those contributions will certainly help to restore confidence in Burundi. And as an important member of the countries of the Great Lakes region, Burundi's own stability, security and development will contribute to peace and stability there. We therefore encourage the Government and the people of Burundi to continue on this trajectory of peace, a luxury that is hard to obtain and more difficult to maintain. Indonesia looks forward to working as a partner with Burundi and sharing our own experience with our brothers and sisters in the region.

**Mr. Schulz** (Germany): I would first like to thank our briefers, Mr. Kafando and Ambassadors Mohammed and Lauber, for their excellent and comprehensive presentations. I have five points that I would like to make.

First of all, Burundi's unresolved political crisis and volatile security situation, and the consequent regional tensions, are deeply concerning. The threat to regional peace and stability is particularly visible in the increased tensions and alarming troop movements in North and South Kivu and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a clear demonstration of the cross-border nature of Burundi's political crisis. We call on all stakeholders to refrain from violence and from engaging in any kind of proxy war in the region.

Secondly, we believe firmly that the most promising solution to Burundi's crisis lies within the region. We commend former President Mkapa's relentless efforts in support of the inter-Burundian dialogue and in producing a report and road map. We have taken note of the summit of the East African Community (EAC) held earlier this month. It is now up to the EAC to lead the inter-Burundian dialogue on a successful path. We trust in the commitment and diligence of East Africa's leaders in that regard, especially those of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. We encourage the African Union to explore the possibilities for further assisting the EAC in the process. All efforts should be aimed at creating new momentum for continued negotiations and dialogue.

Thirdly, the announcement by President Nkurunziza of Burundi that he will not seek re-election in 2020 is a positive step, but further serious commitment on the part of the national authorities will be essential if they are to ensure free, inclusive and fair elections in 2020, which are crucial to long-term stability and to building trust among the people. We call on Burundi to open up the political space to different candidates and parties, as well as to ensure the independence of the National Electoral Commission. The registration of the Congrès national pour la Liberté party last week was a very encouraging step in that regard.

Fourthly, in the light of Germany's strategic focus on prevention and stabilization, we welcome the efforts of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in the Burundi country configuration. The connection between the PBC and the Security Council is important, and it is not a one-way street. Jürg Lauber's briefing is an excellent example of the added value of the advisory work of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Germany fully respects the sovereignty of Burundi. However, we take this opportunity to express our deep concern about the persistently dire human rights situation in Burundi over the past weeks and months, which was also reflected in the most recent report of the Secretary-General of November 2018 (S/2018/1028). Long-term political stability cannot be achieved without respect for human rights, which are also an important part of peacebuilding efforts. That is why we are deeply worried about the closure of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Bujumbura as a sign of the lack of interest in cooperation with internationally agreed mechanisms. We also followed the suspension of



international non-governmental organizations with serious concern. A significant number of those NGOs have not re-registered and many of them plan to leave the country. That will make it increasingly difficult to effectively monitor the human rights situation on the ground and will further limit the space for political actors, media and civil society.

In that regard, we welcome the monitoring through the African Union human rights observer mission and emphasize their important function and role. We also value the investigative work of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi of the Human Rights Council and look forward to their update next month. We call on the Government of Burundi to collaborate with the Commission of Inquiry.

Fifthly, and lastly, Mr. Lauber talked about the underfunding for humanitarian purposes. Let me just say that that is also very important to us. Germany increased its humanitarian assistance in Burundi to €15 million in 2018, with a focus on support to internally displaced people and refugees. Development assistance is similarly important to protect the Burundi population from further destabilization. Germany contributed €24 million in 2018 to ensure the provision of basic services, including health and sanitation.

**Mr. Allen** (United Kingdom): Let me join others in thanking today's briefers for their updates on the situation in Burundi.

We welcome the efforts and dedication of former President Benjamin Mkapa in support of the East African Community-led intra-Burundi dialogue. We now look to the East African Community and the Government of Burundi to take that work forward. We very much encourage the region to remain engaged. We think that the support of the region is vital to stability in Burundi. I would just like to say that I listened very carefully to what some colleagues have said about this. I would say to them that we should of course not overstate the risks, nor can we understate them. No member of the Council should need reminding of the terrible consequences of inter-ethnic tension that we have seen in the region in the past. The East African Community and the African Union are engaged because stability is at risk. As I have said, we should not overstate the risks, nor should we understate them as we consider this issue.

Credible, free and fair elections in 2020 are crucial to peace and prosperity in Burundi and across the region. Parties must be allowed to campaign freely in

the run-up to the election. In that light, we welcome the registration of political parties as a sign of the opening of political space. We continue to salute the President's decision not to stand in the 2020 elections. The United Kingdom reiterates the African Union's call for the Government of Burundi and the political parties in that country to work together for the smooth conduct of the next elections. We think that it would be helpful for there to be engagement between the United Nations and the Government of Burundi to inform any decisions on how the United Nations could best support Burundi in its electoral process.

The continued reports of human rights violations are deeply concerning. As the November report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/1028) makes clear, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights continued to receive allegations of grave violations and abuses, including killings, forced disappearances, ill-treatment, cases of arbitrary arrest and detention and threats and restrictions on freedom of association, expression and movement. It is therefore extremely worrying that reporting has been restricted by the Government of Burundi, which requested the closure of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on 5 December. We regret the closure of the Office, and we encourage the Government of Burundi to continue talks with the Resident Coordinator's team to determine how human rights experts and officers can be attached to the country team and can help to inform that important part of the work. As Ambassador Lauber said in a statement agreed by the Government of Burundi, among others, human rights are a key part of peacebuilding. We do the people of Burundi no service if we do not acknowledge that or even mention it.

The run-up to the 2020 elections is a critical time for Burundi. We all have talked about and welcomed the current stability in Burundi, but failure to address alleged human rights violations will threaten it, as will the ongoing humanitarian crisis. With those elections in mind, we believe that it is crucial that the region and the international community remain seized of the situation. We therefore believe that Burundi should remain on the Council's agenda.

**Mr. Meza-Cuadra** (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation appreciates the convening of this meeting and the briefings by Mr. Michel Kafando, Ambassador Fatima Mohammed and Ambassador Jürg Lauber.

We would like to begin our statement by commending the actions of the Government of Burundi in connection with the upcoming general elections, including the announcement by President Nkurunziza that he will not stand, the adoption of the national development plan and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the period from 2019 to 2023.

However, we believe that those objectives should be complemented by strengthening the intra-Burundian dialogue, which does not yet have the participation of all the stakeholders. It is important to remember that inclusive dialogue is the only viable way to genuinely make progress towards peace and reconciliation and the implementation of the commitments made in the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi.

We believe that the preparations for the next general elections, scheduled for 2020, must be complemented by the necessary confidence-building measures among all political and social stakeholders. We think that it is positive that the national development plan, linked to the Sustainable Development Goals, seeks to promote the development of rural areas of Burundi based on good governance, sustainable management of the environment and planned land use.

In that regard, the support that the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) can provide in that context is important, as Ambassador Lauber said, with a view to achieving a sustainable economy. The efforts of the PBC with regard to promoting dialogue on that issue between the Government and international institutions and partners are also significant.

On the other hand, we note with concern the ongoing reports of human rights violations and abuses. Like other representatives, we believe that the Government's decision to definitively close the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights does not help the objective of providing full guarantees to all Burundian actors in the free exercise of their fundamental rights. We believe that it is important to find points of convergence and to resolve the differences that prevent the presence of the Office in the country.

The humanitarian situation continues to be a source of concern when we see the continuing presence of Burundian refugees in various neighbouring countries. We believe that the Government must take action on that issue with the support of the international community.

We therefore believe that it is important for the Council to continue to monitor and support developments in the country and for regional and subregional organizations and neighbouring countries to continue to provide their assistance and support in order to strengthen Burundi's response to its upcoming objectives and challenges, including the holding of credible, transparent and inclusive elections in 2020.

**Mr. Wu Haitao** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China would like to thank Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi; Ambassador Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; and Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their briefings.

At present, calm and stability are prevailing in Burundi overall. The Burundian Government has been actively implementing the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, moving the political process forward and promoting reconciliation among the country's political groups. It has drawn up a road map in preparation for the general elections in 2020 and established the National Independent Electoral Commission. China welcomes the fact that Burundi refugees have also begun returning home. We congratulate Burundi on its election to the African Union Peace and Security Council.

Burundi is an important country of the Great Lakes region of Africa. The aforementioned developments fully attest to the assured ability and commitment of the Government and the people of Burundi to resolve the country's internal political issues and maintain national peace and stability on their own. The international community should fully acknowledge the efforts of the Burundian Government to maintain peace and stability in the country. In that context, China would like to underscore the following two points.

First, we should respect Burundi's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity and genuinely support the Burundian Government's prerogative to take charge of managing the country's domestic affairs. The international community should take a comprehensive, impartial and objective view of the current situation in Burundi and contribute constructively to the long-term stability and development of the country and of the region at large. China welcomes the efforts of regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union and the East

African Community, to mediate in the political process in Burundi. We hope that those regional organizations will continue to strengthen engagement and consultation with the Burundian Government and provide assistance to the Government, as needed.

China notes that the Burundian Government has time and again stated that the situation in Burundi is not a threat to regional peace and security and that the issue should not remain on the Council's agenda. The Security Council should heed the sentiments voiced by the representatives of Burundi and make the necessary adjustments promptly in the light of the latest developments, with a view to sending a positive message.

Secondly, we should continue to increase humanitarian assistance and economic support for Burundi. China notes that, in recent years, Burundian refugees abroad have begun returning to the country in large numbers. The number of returnees may peak in 2019. We hope the international community will provide the necessary and timely assistance to help the Burundian Government accommodate returning refugees.

Development is a guarantee of peace. We hope the international community and international partners can meet their commitments in a timely manner and, in line with development plans of the Burundian Government, focus on supporting agriculture, infrastructure, education, environmental protection and so on. We call on the international organizations and institutions concerned to resume economic cooperation with and development assistance to Burundi as soon as possible. China commends and supports the continued efforts of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission and the United Nations country team to promote Burundi's reconstruction and socioeconomic development.

As a long-standing supporter of Burundi's peace process, China stands ready to continue playing a constructive role in helping Burundi to achieve peace, stability and sustainable development.

**Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve** (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, the Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations for their briefings.

I would like to address three main points.

First, with regard to the internal situation in Burundi, we welcome President Nkurunziza's repeatedly stated intention not to stand as a candidate in the 2020 presidential elections. At the same time, we remain concerned about a few issues. The region and the international community agree on the goal of holding credible, fair, inclusive and free presidential and legislative elections in 2020. To that end, we again stress the need to follow a consensus-based and inclusive road map, and the importance of respecting the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement. In that regard, we welcome the substantive work conducted by Mr. Mkapa, the former facilitator of the inter-Burundian dialogue initiated by the East African Community. We share that view. It is unfortunate that the Burundian Government refused to participate in the most recent round of the dialogue, despite the fact that many differences of opinion remain as we approach the end of the process.

Respect for the freedom of opposition parties will be an essential part of the electoral process. We welcome the fact that the new party of the main opponent, Agathon Rwaswa, has been officially recognized. That is an undeniably positive development.

Regrettably, the human rights situation in Burundi remains a source of concern. We are particularly concerned about the fact that there is still a considerable number of arrests, arbitrary detentions, threats to and restrictions on the freedom of association, freedom of expression and freedom of movement, as reported by the Commission of Inquiry, as well as in the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/1028). In that difficult context, we deplore in particular the decision to close the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We call on the Government to make progress in the area of human rights and to step up dialogue with a view to resuming close cooperation with the United Nations and the African Union on the issue.

From a socioeconomic perspective and in particular with regard to the national development plan, it is essential to deepen and intensify dialogue with various cooperation partners. Belgium certainly stands ready to do so. I would also like to underscore the participation of all main actors, in particular women, young people and civil society. That is why we are concerned about the measures taken by the Burundian Government to suspend foreign non-governmental organizations

(NGOs), which, in turn, has led to the departure of some NGOs.

Secondly, at the regional level, we note several spin-off developments that are equally important. The latest report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2018/1133) appears to indicate that the activities of some Burundian rebel groups in South Kivu are on the rise. The report also references Burundi in the context of the recruitment of fighters and the transfer of weapons, ammunition and fighters. I also refer to reports citing cross-border incidents with Rwanda. Although the reason for such incidents is not always clear, they have the potential to destabilize the region. In addition to cross-border incidents, the ongoing problem of Burundian refugees also requires a lasting regional solution.

Thirdly, with regard to the importance of the region, regional problems require regional solutions. It is for that reason that we support strong and increased leadership on the part of the East African Community, as well as the substantial involvement of the African Union and other guarantors of the Arusha Agreement. Strong leadership within the region is indeed a prerequisite for resolving the current crisis, but the commitment of the Burundian authorities is also vital. We therefore call on them to demonstrate meaningful openness and pursue dialogue without preconditions.

Lastly, we remain convinced that the Security Council can and must contribute to this discussion as long as the crisis has yet to be completely resolved. As I said, the situation in Burundi continues to have ramifications for the entire region. In that regard, we commend the Secretary-General's proposal to submit to the Council a list of options as to the role that the United Nations can play in Burundi. The Council must remain seized of this issue.

**Mr. Mielus** (Poland): At the outset, I would like to thank Special Envoy of the Secretary-General Michel Kafando; Ambassador Jürg Lauber, in his capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission; and Ambassador Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, for their valuable briefings.

I would like to focus my intervention on three issues: first, the political process; secondly, human rights aspects; and, thirdly, the socioeconomic situation.

The political situation still remains a matter of serious concern for us, especially as the presidential elections planned for 2020 are approaching. The risk of the further escalation of violence and ethnic tensions persist, and it is the role of the Burundian authorities to ensure that the electoral process will be free, fair, transparent and truly inclusive.

The prevailing situation in Burundi has serious regional security implications. Poland continues to hold the position that concerted regional support for resolving the crisis is crucial. We hope for collective leadership and unity of purpose to prevent the resurgence of violence in Burundi. Poland commends all the efforts made by the East African Community and the facilitator, Benjamin Mkapa, to enable the inter-Burundian dialogue, and hopes that this process will lead to a widely accepted road map that sets the path for the holding of credible and peaceful presidential elections scheduled for mid-2020, in the spirit and the letter of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement.

We remain concerned about the human rights situation in Burundi, which could undermine any initiative for reconciliation, peace and justice. Poland supports the efforts of the United Nations, the African Union and the countries of the region to effectively improve the situation on the ground in that regard. Poland once again calls on the Government of Burundi to take tangible steps to restore cooperation with international human rights mechanisms, mainly the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi of the Human Rights Council. At the same time, we urge the Burundian authorities to improve good governance, ensure media freedom and open up democratic space ahead of the elections scheduled for 2020.

The ongoing political impasse has also had a negative impact on the economy and the humanitarian situation in the country. We commend the efforts made by the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission to bring about a sustainable improvement to the lives of Burundian society. At the same time, Poland welcomes the continuation of the process of repatriating refugees under the tripartite agreement with Tanzania and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. However, we emphasize that such a process needs to be voluntary and based on individual choices.



In conclusion, Poland still believes that the Arusha peace agreement remains the main instrument for achieving peace and stability in Burundi and in the whole Great Lakes region. In the face of renewed tensions and the deadlock in the inclusive dialogue, it is crucial to address the current challenges on a sustainable basis and enable elections to be held in 2020 in satisfactory conditions. In that context, the situation in Burundi continuously requires the special attention of the Security Council and the international community.

**Mr. Singer Weisinger** (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. Michel Kafando, Ambassador Fatima Mohammed and Ambassador Lauber for their informative briefings on the current situation in Burundi.

The Dominican Republic notes with concern the ongoing humanitarian situation in Burundi. Despite positive news, such as improvements in malnutrition levels, millions of people, including 3 million children, continue to suffer from food insecurity. Likewise, the outbreak of cholera in the Democratic Republic of the Congo puts Burundi at high risk of an epidemic, with more than 140 cases already having been reported since December 2018. It is important that we not lose sight of the situation. We believe that the outbreak must be dealt with aggressively in its early stages, with the support of the relevant sectors, so as to prevent its further spread.

Although the number of refugees and persons seeking asylum has decreased, the International Organization for Migration estimates that approximately 300,000 Burundian refugees, most of whom were displaced by natural disasters, continue to live in shelters, which demonstrates the need to address the causes of those flows of people and their possible solutions, while duly and systematically considering the terrible impact of climate-related disasters. In so doing, we would contribute to building not only lasting peace in Burundi, but the foundations necessary for development, based on resilience and sustainability, that would lead to the return of those people to their homes and the restoration of their livelihoods. As the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has urged, it is also imperative to ramp up investment in host countries with a view to prioritizing the protection of the environment and economic development.

The human rights situation in Burundi remains a matter of concern, especially in the light of alleged cases of intimidation of members of the opposition and

the continued restriction of civil liberties, such as the freedoms of expression, association and movement. In that regard, the recent suspension of international non-governmental organizations, which has created gaps in the aid received by Burundi's most disadvantaged and vulnerable people, is particularly troubling.

We welcome the allocation of \$7.1 million by the Peacebuilding Fund in September 2018 to expand political space and strengthen the new Government, with two projects aimed at, inter alia, empowering women mediators, women's groups and young people as key actors in establishing social cohesion, community security and political processes, as well as strengthening the rule of law and good governance. We are convinced that the meaningful participation of women and young people is critical to achieving stability and peace in Burundi. We therefore urge the Government of Burundi to continue to move forward in preparations of the 2020 electoral process, while prioritizing the creation of the conditions necessary for the holding of free and fair elections and respecting the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement.

Burundi can and must take advantage of the current democratic transition process to move towards the stability that its citizens deserve. In that regard, we encourage the resumption of the internal political dialogue.

**Mr. Almunayekh** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Michel Kafando; the observer of the African Union, Ms. Fatima Mohammed; and the Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, Mr. Jürg Lauber, for their valuable briefings. I would like to address three issues in my statement

First, the political situation has been returning to relative calm since the political tensions and acts of violence began in Burundi in 2015. The Republic of Burundi witnessed important political developments in 2018, including the constitutional referendum in May 2018, which took place under stable and calm conditions; the announcement by President Nkurunziza that he would not run in the presidential elections in 2020; the announcement of a road map to organize presidential elections in 2020, as well as the outline of provisions provided by the National Independent Electoral Commission; and the decision of the Government of Burundi to finance the 2020 elections in its entirety

and its intention to begin an inclusive national dialogue among all sectors of the population.

Those steps represent important political developments. We hope that they will quickly be put into action so that the Burundian population can benefit from the relative calm until the presidential elections. We also hope that the elections will involve the participation of the entire population and all political parties, and that they will be free, fair, transparent and credible. Free expression by all the different factions of civil society, including young people, women, regional and international organizations must be guaranteed.

In that regard, we commend the efforts that have been made by the African Union and the East African Community with a view to a peaceful solution to the political and security situations in Burundi, through an inclusive dialogue based on the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement. We also welcome Burundi's participation in the East African Community Summit that was held on 1 February. We greatly appreciate as well the mediation efforts facilitated by President Museveni of Uganda and Mr. Mkapa as part of the inter-Burundian political dialogue. I especially thank Mr. Mkapa, since he has come to the end of his three-year mandate as facilitator. I wish him every success in his future endeavours.

There is no doubt that cooperation between the Government of Burundi and international and regional organizations, including the United Nations, the African Union and East African Community, as well as neighbouring countries, is of great importance to achieve the desired stability. Cooperation is one of the factors in reaching a sustained solution before the presidential elections. We are fully confident that the inter-Burundian dialogue is an important means that will greatly contribute to facilitating the political process. In addition, it is important for political leaders in exile to be able to return to the country, and political prisoners to be freed following their arrest during the acts of violence in 2015. There is also the issue of the return of refugees and their reintegration into society. All of those different steps are important and necessary for achieving political, security and economic stability.

I would also like to note the outcome of the thirty-second African Union summit, which took place last week, and its recognition of the fact that Burundi is returning to peace and stability. I welcome the efforts made by the Government of Burundi to prepare for

free and democratic elections in 2020, as well as the creation of national mechanisms to prepare for those elections, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in accordance with Arusha Agreement of 2000, which has made welcome efforts with regard to the security situation in Burundi, which is generally relatively stable.

Secondly, concerning security and humanitarian situations, the security situation in Burundi is generally calm and improving despite some acts of violence and continued activities by armed groups in certain regions. We hope that the security situation will remain stable and that the Government of Burundi will take the opportunity that provides to intensify its efforts for holding of the national dialogue so as to bring all political parties to the negotiating table and guarantee the holding of peaceful and credible elections in 2020 that are free of acts of violence.

As for the humanitarian situation in Burundi, although it is improved compared to the last two years, with a decrease in the number of people who face food insecurity, it is still a subject of concern due to acts of violence that constitute violations of human rights and international law. We call for ending them and bringing the perpetrators to justice.

I would like to commend the progressive voluntary return of Burundian refugees. We underscore the importance of the Government ensuring the social and economic reintegration of those who have already returned, while providing guarantees for the remaining refugees to return to their homes.

Thirdly, and lastly, concerning the economic and social sector, the including the people in the development and reform efforts is a vital and important factor to build societies with a secure and bright future. We look forward to the establishment of genuine cooperation among all the people of Burundi and their inclusion in the decision-making process, including young people and women.

In conclusion, we hope that the Government of Burundi will achieve a positive outcome as a result of its development plans. It is also our hope that those plans will contribute to permanent stability in the security and political situations.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Equatorial Guinea.

We thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Michel Kafando, for his updated briefing on the situation in Burundi. We are also grateful for the presence, participation and statement of Her Excellency Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, as well as for the Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ambassador Jürg Lauber.

We appreciate the efforts and work of Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, facilitator of the inter-Burundian dialogue, whose final report was presented at the East African Community regional summit, which coincided with the end of his term of office. We hope that work will be followed by His Excellency Mr. Yoweri Museveni, President of Uganda, current Chair of the East African Community, so as to continue supporting dialogue among Burundians before the next elections, which are scheduled for 2020.

As a member State of the African Union and a non-permanent member of the Security Council, we believe and are convinced that respect for the order and constitution of each country defines and sustains what modern States are today, which therefore guarantees their stability and plurality.

We appreciate the efforts made by the stakeholders involved, which led to the signing of the Kayanza road map for the 2020 general elections and the appointment of the new members of the National Independent Electoral Commission. We encourage the Government and all those involved to continue promoting inter-Burundian dialogue, with a view to the Burundians themselves taking the lead in the process.

In that context, we must acknowledge that today in Burundi there is a return to normalcy after the tensions that followed the 2015 elections. Presently, Burundi has democratically elected institutions throughout the country. They will be renewed in the same fashion in the 2020 elections, the preparations of which are taking place in an atmosphere of tranquillity and calm. We should at this point express our satisfaction at the strong political will the Government of Burundi has shown by financing all the expenses of the 2020 elections, thereby demonstrating its desire to take ownership of the elections.

I should also like to point out that the 32nd Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union, held recently in Addis Ababa, praised the efforts of the Government of Burundi to prepare for free,

democratic and peaceful elections in 2020 by setting up appropriate mechanisms in accordance with the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement. It also commended President Nkurunziza's decision not to run in the presidential elections of 2020, even though there is no legal obstacles to his doing so.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea expresses its appreciation for the spirit of reconciliation and tolerance that currently prevails in Burundi following the return from exile of five political leaders, including former President Sylvestre Ntibantunganya and former Second Deputy President Alice Nzomukunda, among others, at the invitation of the authorities and with guarantees for their security and protection.

These facts, along with the release last year of more than 2,000 prisoners, including insurgents who took part in the violent demonstrations of 2015, the contribution by Burundi of more than 6,000 troops to the peacekeeping missions of the African Union and the United Nations and the return of 210,000 refugees from 2016 to date, together represent real and palpable demonstrations of the very positive evolution of the situation in this Central African country. The recognition of the National Congress for Freedom political party led by Agathon Rwaswa is another sign of the unequivocally positive improvement of the situation in Burundi.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea is greatly encouraged by the current situation in Burundi. The peace and calm that currently prevail in that country should lead the Security Council to seriously consider removing Burundi from its agenda.

Equatorial Guinea aligns itself with the efforts of the international community to find a peaceful way out of conflict situations by the commitment to the establishment and consolidation of stable, peaceful and prosperous societies, in which the national interest and the internal coexistence of fair, transparent and inclusive sociopolitical and cultural institutions are paramount. Therefore, any initiative whose objective is the consolidation of peace and the return to international legality and that gives priority to a negotiated and peaceful end to conflict will always have our support.

We take this opportunity to call on the international community to continue providing strong support to the Government and other concerned parties in the development of confidence-building measures that will guarantee an appropriate environment for peaceful

elections and in the commitment to the Constitution and the road map for a peaceful transfer of power after the elections in 2020 in an environment of peace and national reconciliation.

In conclusion, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea welcomes the launch of Burundi's national development plan for the period from 2018 to 2027, whose implementation is a crucial element for the sustainable development of Burundi in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

We congratulate Burundi on its election as a member of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union at the 32nd Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union, held recently in Addis Ababa.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Burundi.

**Mr. Shingiro** (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time I am taking the floor under your presidency, Sir, I would like to extend my warm congratulations to you personally and to your country, Equatorial Guinea, on your deserved assumption of the rotating presidency of the Security Council for the month of February. We are very grateful for your country's unparalleled leadership in defending Africa's interests and for its efforts to ensure that the principles of the Charter are respected by the Council.

I have the honour to express the same thanks to the other members of the Council for sparing no effort to uphold respect for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and especially for addressing the situation in Burundi in the Council since 2015. It would not be out of place to once again express my regret at the fact that there are still a number of delegations — although certainly in the minority — who have held on to the same manifestly fixed positions for more than four years, instead of viewing the situation in Burundi with objectivity and discernment.

I cannot help but thank my colleague Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for his constructive contribution to this debate. We reaffirm our full support for and cooperation with Mr. Lauber.

I would also like to thank my colleague Ambassador Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, for the very constructive contribution of her briefing to this debate. If I may, I would like to encourage her participation from time to time in future discussions by the Council of the situation of Burundi.

Allow me also, through you, Mr. President, to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, Mr. Michel Kafando, for his briefing this afternoon.

The purpose of my statement this afternoon is to share with you, Mr. President, and the members of the Council an overview of the new developments at various levels that have taken place since the last Council meeting on the situation in Burundi, held on 21 November 2018 (see S/PV.8408).

At the political level, the trajectory of peace and reconciliation and the strengthening of democracy in Burundi have been positive since 2017. That trend continued in 2018 and the first two months of 2019. National mechanisms for the organization of peaceful elections in 2020 are gradually being put in place. A Constitution that affirms democratic achievements, national sovereignty, dignity, inclusiveness, reconciliation and national cohesion was promulgated on 7 June 2018 by the Head of State.

The National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) has already been set up and is operational. A dialogue between the approved political parties was organized in a politically, ethnically and gender-inclusive manner to reach agreement on the Kayanza road map leading to peaceful elections in 2020. In the same vein, inclusive discussions on the revised draft of the electoral code were initiated and the document has been analysed at the level of the Council of Ministers. The reform of the electoral code aims to adapt it to the new Constitution of 7 June 2018. The ultimate objective is to move towards an electoral code that will lead to orderly, transparent and peaceful elections in 2020.

At the budgetary level, the Burundian people have chosen to take full ownership of their electoral process by financing it with domestic funds without recourse to external resources, which are often unpredictable and conditional.

At the organizational level, everything will be done to create an environment that is conducive to the holding of democratic, credible, inclusive and peaceful



elections, which would be a guarantee of political stability in our country. Since the beginning of 2018, the Government of Burundi has consistently been making goodwill gestures aimed at creating a general atmosphere of calm in the country.

Without being exhaustive, I wish to stress the repeated statements by the Head of State regarding his decision not to run in the 2020 elections, even though he has every right to under the current Constitution. This is a very important political and democratic gesture that can serve as an example for the subregion and elsewhere.

The transfer of power from an outgoing President who has completed his term to the President who will take office in 2020 will be a watershed moment in Burundi's political history, because this will be the first time since the independence of our country, in 1962, that a democratically elected president was able to complete his constitutional mandate without being assassinated, as happened in 1993 with the despicable killing of President Melchior Ndadaye after only 101 days in power.

The freeing of more than 2,000 prisoners last year, which you, Mr. President, highlighted in your national capacity, which included young troublemakers and insurgents from the 2015 events, also falls within the ongoing trend of reconciliation, social cohesion and political tolerance in the country.

Concerning the inter-Burundian dialogue, my delegation wishes to recall that dialogue is a culture and a cardinal virtue that is anchored in the lives of the people of Burundi. There is no longer a need for outside actors to take a leadership role in this process, which is our very own. It is clear that the conclusion of the dialogue, which up to now had been conducted by the subregion, does not mean an end to dialogue on the electoral process. The current political consultations under way in Burundi between registered political parties will continue, in a patriotic, open and constructive spirit, until the successful conclusion of the process.

On security, the situation in Burundi is calm, stable and fully under control. This trend is irreversible. Like 2017, 2018 was characterized by a largely satisfactory security situation throughout the national territory, with the exception, of course, of some isolated cases of ordinary crime such as can also found in other countries, including those represented here.

Thanks to this peace and stability, regained at a high cost, the thirty-second summit of Heads of State of the African Union, held on 10 and 11 February in Addis Ababa, welcomed the efforts made by the Government of Burundi in the process of preparing for the 2020 elections, which included by putting in place, inter alia, national mechanisms to prepare for those elections as well as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in keeping with the 2000 Arusha Agreement. The summit also welcomed the exemplary decision of the Head of State to voluntarily forgo his constitutional right to run in the 2020 elections.

The summit also reiterated its many calls on the European Union to lift the unilateral sanctions imposed on Burundi. These are politically motivated, immoral sanctions, imposed in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and of the duty of international solidarity. The near-automatic renewal of the sanctions each year, without taking account of the remarkable progress that has been made since 2015, should by any line of thinking cease so as to give a chance to frank and sincere dialogue aimed at a resumption of mutually beneficial and respectful cooperation.

I turn now to Burundi's contribution to peacekeeping operations and to the fight against terrorism at the continental level. Burundi has contributed more than 6,000 soldiers to United Nations and African Union peacekeeping operations, mainly in Somalia and the Central African Republic. The laudable work carried out by all of our peacekeepers, who have voluntarily chosen to sacrifice their lives to save those of others, far from their home countries and in particularly hostile conditions, must be rightly appreciated.

Among other things, we must refrain from any differentiated treatment of our troops as a tool of political pressure. Operational capacity in the context of the implementation of United Nations peacekeeping mandates should be the main criterion for the evaluation of soldiers in peacekeeping missions.

Burundi, which has just been elected as a member of the African Union Peace and Security Council, will remain deeply committed, alongside other nations, to promoting peace by silencing the guns in Africa by 2020. I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, for having chosen to consider this important issue during your presidency, towards the end of the month, on 27 February, I believe. This renewed confidence demonstrated in Burundi by the States members of

the African Union is fresh evidence of the credibility of Burundian diplomacy and its increasing role in the maintenance of international peace and security at the regional and international levels.

On the return of refugees, in 2018 we received 58,262 voluntarily repatriated people returning from Tanzania, the Congo, Kenya and Uganda, as well as several thousand others who returned without the help of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The voluntary return movement is tremendous, averaging more than 1,000 returns a week. By way of illustration, today alone UNHCR repatriated from Tanzania 595 Burundians, including 177 families, through the Mugina border crossing, in Makamba province, in the southern part of the country. To properly manage this process, my delegation wishes once again to reiterate its call on UNHCR and on friends of the region to intervene with certain host countries who are holding hostage some exiled compatriots by erecting artificial obstacles to their voluntary return home, and to ensure that refugee camps retain their civilian character, in keeping with the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

Speaking of the civilian character of refugee camps, Burundi accepted the public excuses of UNHCR authorities following the startling discovery by the Tanzanian authorities of more than 1,500 military uniforms distributed by UNHCR under unclear conditions in refugee camps in Tanzania. My delegation hopes that such a questionable undertaking, which could have destabilised my country, will not recur.

For its part, the national reconciliation process is continuing under the leadership of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Its mission is to inquire into and establish the truth about the serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law committed in Burundi during the period from 26 February 1985 to 4 December 2008, when the armed conflict in Burundi ended.

The establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in line with the Arusha Agreement, is crucial in our country, above all in moving towards a Burundi that is reconciled with its past, which was characterized not only by glorious events but also by fratricidal wars whose scars remain fresh in many of our families and communities.

Beyond rewriting the history of Burundi, which has often been falsified, the Commission must carry out an important and sensitive undertaking aimed at healing wounds, restoring the dignity of victims and expressing gratitude to those who protected others during the various crises that Burundi has gone through, slowly but daily working to clear the path towards national reconciliation in our country. As the Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission so aptly noted, besides national efforts, this ambitious reconciliation process requires the support of all.

On the promotion and protection of human rights, Burundi reiterates its readiness and its will to cooperate with other countries and the United Nations in promoting the protection of human rights in Burundi and elsewhere in the world, based, of course, on the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. This noble mission will be feasible only through mutually respectful cooperation, frank and sincere dialogue among Member States, and the use of mechanisms accepted by all, such as the Universal Periodic Review. The dangerous tendency of certain States to seek to transform the Human Rights Council into a tool for exerting political pressure and regulating geopolitics in the countries of the South risks undermining the objectives set by Member States when the Human Rights Council was established on 15 March 2006 through General Assembly resolution 60/251.

The drift towards the excessive politicization of human rights and the policy of selectivity and double standards run counter to the principles of the universality of human rights. The Government of Burundi is more committed than ever. Dialogue and cooperation based on mutual trust will always be the cornerstone of its initiatives in the process of promoting human rights.

I cannot conclude my remarks without reiterating once again what has now become my slogan before the Council — our usual and legitimate appeal to the Security Council to remove the issue of Burundi from its agenda. We maintain that the current political and security situation in the country in no way constitutes a threat to international peace and security that could justify its being arbitrarily maintained on the Council's agenda.

The series of meetings on Burundi, held on the basis of resolution 2303 (2016), which is now essentially obsolete, could become yet another factor

of destabilization instead of promoting peace and calm. For four years, a handful of external stakeholders have stubbornly ignored these multiple calls for Burundi to be removed from the Council's agenda, and it is

beginning to feel like an eternity for the people of Burundi. It is time for those who are still wavering to come down on the right side of history.

*The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.*