

# REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI



## PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC Secretariat-General of the Government

### COMMUNIQUÉ FROM THE GOVERNMENT FOLLOWING THE CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM OF MAY 17, 2018

1. Burundians and foreigners living in Burundi witnessed a very important national event for the country, namely the constitutional referendum held on 17 May 2018. Voting for this new fundamental law that will now govern the country was conducted in calm and serenity throughout the country.
2. The Government of Burundi therefore wishes to congratulate the People of Burundi for responding massively and calmly to the constitutional referendum with a 96% turnout and a score of 73% in favor of the new constitution. This is a strong signal sent to the entire international community and particularly to the hostile or skeptical opinions about the successful outcome of this process. The Government also congratulates the Burundians of the Diaspora who voted in favor of the draft constitution with an overwhelming majority even those residing in the countries hosting the putschists.
3. The Government is particularly grateful to the Independent National Electoral Commission and its branches for their professionalism in organizing the referendum from the beginning of the process to its completion. Lastly, the Government thanks the Security Forces for all the work done day and night in order to insure the success of this referendum. The Government also thanks the media which worked in synergy and informed the population uninterruptedly about the conduct of elections until the proclamation of provisional results by the CENI.

Finally, a special tribute goes to the Defense and security Forces for all the work done day and night to secure brilliantly the referendum ballot.

4. The Government of Burundi, however, cannot pass over the hostile views expressed over this referendum when the campaign was in full swing, through alarmist communiqués, some of which containing apocalyptic prophecies. These include, among others, those of the United States' Department of State, the Conference of Catholic Bishops of Burundi, followed by the European Union, and especially the

correspondence addressed to President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni by the Chairman of the Commission of the African Union, Mr. Mahamatt Faki.

5. Although the Government of Burundi may extend the benefit of good faith to some in their statements, it cannot help regretting that these alarmist messages were interpreted by terrorist groups as a call to step up their hatred for the Burundian people, by attacking and savagely massacring peaceful innocent citizens including women and children in Ruhagarika Village of the Buganda Commune, Cibitoke Province on the night of 10-11 May 2017, just one week before the holding of the Referendum.
6. These inappropriate and untruthful remarks served as a catalyst and pretext for the terrorists and their political sponsors to desperately attempt to stop not only the referendum process, but also to sabotage other major activities, notably the COMESA Summit of Heads of State, scheduled from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> of June 2018, and whose preparations have already been completed. The Government deplores the fact that the international community has not condemned the massacre of innocent people by terrorists from the DRC, as it often does when similar cases occur in other places.
7. The Government of Burundi also deplores the fact that these statements by the partners, some of whom, their representatives in the country, especially those of the European Union or the United States, recognize in meetings with Burundian officials that both the security and political situation has significantly improved in Burundi. They visibly either do not report correctly to their governments the situation as it stands or simply and that seems likely, these governments have a preset agenda on Burundi.
8. With regard to the statement made by Mr. Mahamatt Faki, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the Government of Burundi wonders why he is so harsh against Burundi, when there are more worrying files that the Government has handed to his desk, including the destabilization of Burundi and the sub-region by Rwanda whose President currently holds the chairmanship of the Summit of African Union's Heads of State and Government.
9. With regard to the countries that have organized constitutional referendums since 2015 within the African Union, more than a dozen have submitted to their peoples draft constitutions that have been voted and promulgated without neither the European Union nor the United States, let alone the African Union, voicing any protest as they are doing for Burundi, because they know that these peoples exercise an inalienable right and that even their countries carry out similar political activities.

- 10.** The most recent examples are Rwanda, of which President Paul Kagame is currently the Chair of the Summit of African Union's Heads of State and Chad, of which the incumbent Chair of the Commission of the African Union, Mr. Mahammat Faki is a national. Should one conclude that his position vis-à-vis Burundi is a way to disavow the referendum organized in his own country? The Government of Burundi urges the African Union to put the defense and protection of its member states' interests first and not those of their former colonizers.
- 11.** The Government of Burundi wishes to recall that the referendum, as elsewhere, is a matter of national sovereignty and self-determination of the peoples. The Government consequently denounces the particular fury and discriminatory treatment of its people.
- 12.** Returning to the referendum organized by the Government on May 17, 2018, it should be recalled that its funding was fully provided by the Government and that for the first time in the history of Burundi, the population is committed to funding the 2020 elections. This is evidence of real independence and sovereignty. This naturally embarrass those who were accustomed to granting support, with conditions of interference in internal affairs till overseeing bloody coups d'état and whose perpetrators until now unpunished enjoy easy life without being worried in the dwelling places of the sponsors of these ignoble acts.
- 13.** The constitutional reform passed by Referendum should not only be regarded as a response to the insistent demand of the Burundian people through the inclusive dialogue that has been conducted both inside and outside the country, but also as an action to the recommendations of the various political and civil society actors.
- 14.** The Government recalls that, already in 2013 during the National Symposium of Justice from 5 to 9 August 2013 in Gitega, and during the meeting of all political actors on May 20, 2014 in Kayanza under the auspices of BNUB, all these actors had converged on the need for the amendment of the Constitution and some of those who claim that the Referendum of May 17, 2018 was inappropriate were counted among the participants.
- 15.** The massive participation of the population in the electoral campaign, the ruling party, the opposition parties and the political coalitions relaying themselves on the ground under the fair coverage by the state media in an exemplary discipline constitute an irrefutable proof that the Burundian people were ready for this referendum. The concerns raised by some partners were therefore unfounded but rather fabricated for reasons of their interests.

**16.** The Government requests the international community to accompany the Burundians on the path that they have just chosen by their massive vote in total serenity in favor of a new Constitution through the referendum of 17 May 2018.

**17.** To the people of Burundi, the Government once again extends its thanks for the wisdom they have shown throughout this referendum process and urges them to focus on the development work now that this process is concluded, and to prepare in the same serenity the 2020 elections.

**Done at Bujumbura, May 24, 2018**

**Philippe NZOBONARIBA  
Secretary-General and Spokesman  
of the Government.-**