
Bujumbura Declaration

At the invitation of H.E. Minister Charles Nqakula, South African Facilitator of the Burundi peace process, and of Ambassador Kingsley Mamabolo, Special Representative to the Great Lakes Region, the Group of Special Envoys on Burundi met in Bujumbura on 16 and 17 January 2009. Participants discussed the progress achieved so far and the remaining challenges in the implementation of the Agreement of Principles of 18 June 2006, the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement of 7 September 2006, the Magaliesberg Declaration of 10 June 2008, the Ngozi Declaration of 29 August 2008, and the Declaration of the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Great Lakes Region on the Burundi peace process of 4 December 2008.

The Group of Special Envoys on Burundi noted with satisfaction the recent developments in the peace process following the signing of the Declaration of the Summit of 4 December 2008. The Group of Special Envoys was especially encouraged by the spirit of cooperation and partnership that guided the efforts of the Government of Burundi and the National Liberation Forces (FNL) to implement their respective commitments under the Declaration. The Group of Special Envoys particularly welcomed the decision taken by the FNL to change its name and the release of political prisoners and prisoners of war by the Government of Burundi.

During the public session, all speakers, including representatives of political parties and civil society, considering the 2010 elections in particular, reminded:

- The parties that they are primarily responsible for the immediate implementation of the agreements which they have signed.
- Burundians that they are also responsible for deciding on the future of their country.
- The international community of its commitment to support the peace process.

Action points

DDR

The meeting noted with satisfaction that the Rubira assembly area is operational and ready to receive 3,000 FNL combatants and that arrangements are being made to quickly raise the capacity to 6,000 combatants.

The Government of Burundi and the FNL have undertaken to start the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process no later than 30 January 2009.

In this regard, the Government of Burundi has undertaken to recruit the national coordinator and the technical team of the new government structure in charge of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration no later than 30 January 2009.

The World Bank has given assurances of its support for the establishment of this structure within the timeframe mentioned above.

Release of political prisoners and prisoners of war

The meeting welcomed the release of political prisoners and prisoners of war so far and recommended that the issue be resolved at the next meeting of the Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JVMM) scheduled for 21 January 2009. The meeting further emphasised the need to coordinate the activities of the Joint Judicial Commission and the JVMM to speed up the process for the release of the remaining prisoners.

Registration of the FNL as a political party

The meeting expressed the hope that all obstacles to the registration of the FNL as a political party will be overcome no later than 15 February 2009. In this regard, the FNL has undertaken to submit its file for registration as a political party no later than 30 January 2009. The meeting encouraged the Government of Burundi to be flexible and understanding when considering the file.

Separation of children

The FNL has undertaken to immediately and unconditionally separate children associated with its combatants no later than 30 January 2009, once the new government DDR structure becomes operational, with a view to the speedy reunification of the children with their families and their reintegration and rehabilitation.

Sustainable socio-economic reintegration

The Government of Burundi presented a strategy paper on the sustainable socio-economic reintegration of ex-combatants and demobilised elements of the defence and security forces. The Group of Special Envoys took note of the paper with keen interest and urged the Government, in conjunction with partners, to harmonise it with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper before re-submitting it to partners by mid-February 2009.

Integration of FNL members in national institutions

With regard to the issue of integrating FNL members into national institutions and pursuant to the provisions of Paragraph 5 of the Declaration of 4 December 2008, the Group of Special Envoys urged the FNL to continue holding discussions with the Government of Burundi. The Group of Special Envoys also took note that the Facilitator would pursue contacts with both parties to help them reach a consensus as soon as possible.



Conclusion

The Group of Special Envoys has undertaken to mobilise the international community to complete the Burundi peace process, in particular as concerns the funding of the DDR process, sustainable socio-economic reintegration and transformation of the FNL into a political party with the support of and in close cooperation with the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission and other international partners in order to create a conducive environment for building peace and preparing for the 2010 elections.

Done in Bujumbura this 17 January 2009