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The situation in Burundi

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to resolution [2303 \(2016\)](#), in which the Security Council requested me to report to it on the situation in Burundi every three months, including on any public incidents of incitement to hatred and violence. The report covers the period from 14 June to 15 October 2019 and provides details on the latest developments in Burundi, regional efforts to convene an inclusive dialogue and the activities of my Special Envoy for Burundi and the United Nations system in the country. It also provides suggestions on how to advance the inter-Burundian dialogue and includes a discussion of the way forward and an examination of the role of the United Nations in the run-up to the general elections scheduled for 20 May 2020. After the issuance of my previous report of 15 November 2018 ([S/2018/1028](#)), the Secretariat briefed the Security Council on 21 November 2018, 19 February 2019 and 14 June 2019 on the situation in Burundi and the activities of my Special Envoy.

II. Major developments

A. Political developments

2. During the period under review, the impasse over the inter-Burundian dialogue and preparations for the general elections continued to have an impact on political developments in Burundi. The Independent National Electoral Commission published the electoral calendar on 28 June. However, uncertainty persists over the participation of all interested stakeholders in the process, amidst shrinking political space and the need to create an environment conducive to peaceful, transparent and credible elections. While the President of Burundi, Pierre Nkurunziza, has reiterated on several occasions that he will not seek another term in office, the ruling party has yet to designate its candidate for the next presidential election. There has also been a noticeable increase in acts of political intolerance, often perpetrated by the Imbonerakure, the youth wing of the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD), with some local authorities and security services either taking part in, or tolerating, those acts.



Developments within Burundi

3. Since the registration of the Congrès national pour la liberté (CNL) in February 2019, its political activities, as well as those of other parties, such as the Union pour le progrès national (UPRONA) and Forces nationales de libération have been hampered.

4. Following a series of acts of vandalism against CNL offices across the country in June and July, the Spokesperson for CNL claimed on 1 August that more than 10 party offices had been set ablaze or defaced. He concluded that those acts had been part of the ruling party's strategy to intimidate the opposition. On 18 August, a CNL member was killed in the Rugari area, as a result of a clash between CNL supporters returning from the inauguration of their office in the province of Muyinga and a group of unidentified people believed to be members of the Imbonerakure. On 28 August, one Imbonerakure died at Kira Hospital, in Bujumbura, from injuries sustained during another clash between youth members of CNL and CNDD-FDD that occurred on 25 August in the province of Bujumbura Rural.

5. On 15 June, the CNL office in Nyabiraba, in the province of Bujumbura, was set ablaze by unidentified people. The leadership of CNL blamed the incident on the Imbonerakure acting in complicity with police and local administrators. He urged the Government to ensure that all political parties be allowed to carry out their activities freely. The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior rejected the allegations of political intolerance and, with regard to the arson at the CNL office, intimated that it was an act of criminals. Presumed perpetrators were indeed arrested on the same day and tried on 19 June. Among the 15 presumed criminals, 9 were alleged members of CNL. They were sentenced to two years of imprisonment. On 22 June, the leader of CNL denounced the ruling of the court, questioning how members of his party could have set the office ablaze.

6. On 21 August, the First Vice-President of Burundi and the Minister of the Interior held a joint meeting with leaders of political parties, provincial governors and communal authorities, as well as representatives of security and defence forces, to discuss the organization of the 2020 elections. Reportedly, the First Vice-President urged provincial governors and security forces to remain neutral and above political partisanship, regardless of their political affiliations. He blamed local administrators and members of the security and defence forces for preventing transport companies from conveying members of opposition parties to their rallies and demanded that such acts stop.

7. Leaders of political parties and provincial governors signed a one-month truce, during which they would seek appropriate ways to end political intolerance. A follow-up meeting chaired by the First Vice-President and the Minister of the Interior was convened on 24 September in Bujumbura. During the meeting, which was attended by leaders of political parties, 15 out of 18 provincial governors singled out CNL members as instigators of violence targeting CNDD-FDD members. In his assessment, the Minister of the Interior framed the situation as calm, apart from a few isolated cases of insecurity, which he blamed on CNL members. The Secretary-General of CNL denied those allegations.

8. On 9 August, the Minister of the Interior lifted the suspension of the Conseil des patriotes party, along with seven other parties. The parties had been suspended since 13 July for the late submission of their activity reports. On 21 August, the Ministry of the Interior registered Burundi's thirty-fourth political party, the Mouvement des patriotes humanistes.

9. On 30 June, the eve of the fifty-seventh anniversary of the independence of Burundi, President Nkurunziza urged Burundians to resist foreign interference. He

announced the suspension of voluntary contributions to the electoral fund from ordinary citizens and civil servants and announced the renaming of several national landmarks to remind Burundians of significant historical events and personalities.

10. On 16 August, the President's Senior Communications Adviser, the President's Deputy Spokesperson and the Secretary-General of the Government held a press conference in the province of Gitega on the theme "2020 elections: challenges and prospects". They advised Burundians to remain calm and to resist any attempt to disrupt the elections and cause bloodshed. They also asserted that, since gaining independence, Burundi had experienced democracy only in the past 18 years, under CNDD-FDD rule, and argued that the country had made steady progress in the maintenance of peace and security since 2015.

11. On 20 August, President Nkurunziza stated that the three main objectives he had set at the beginning of his term in office had been met, namely: (a) peace, security and justice for all; (b) good governance and democracy; and (c) inclusive and sustainable development. He remarked that Burundi would soon be financially independent and, consequently, become self-sufficient. He also recalled events preceding the 2015 elections and asserted that there were still a few Burundians who were trying to destabilize the country. They would, however, fail, as "Burundians will not want to be enslaved".

12. During a conference held by spokespersons of ministries and public institutions on 21 June, the President's Spokesperson denied any plan to restore monarchy in Burundi, although the monarchy's motto, "God, King and Burundi", is inscribed on some national monuments in lieu of the national motto, "Unity, work and progress". He pointed out that the national motto had been imposed by the UPRONA party and opined that a referendum would be required to transform Burundi into a monarchy.

13. On 4 August, the exiled opposition platform 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 (CNARED) outlined in a press release the conditions for its participation in the 2020 elections, which included the opening of the political space and an end to the persecution of opposition members and supporters. CNARED urged the Government to engage with all Burundian political actors, inside and outside the country, to agree on ways to hold credible and inclusive elections in 2020. It also called upon the international community and all partners of Burundi to continue pressuring the Government to create an environment conducive to fair elections. The Executive Secretary of the platform, Anicet Niyonkuru, called for a meeting with the Government to agree on preconditions for the return of CNARED members to Burundi, whether they were under prosecution or not. His move was rejected by other political leaders in exile, notably those who had resigned from CNARED in early March, who likened it to capitulation.

14. Subsequently, a government delegation led by the Ombudsman met with representatives of CNARED from 28 August to 2 September in Nairobi. The Spokesperson of the Ombudsman then issued a press statement clarifying that the meeting was informal and followed previous meetings that the Ombudsman had held inside and outside Burundi with political actors, as part of his mandate. The press statement also highlighted that the meeting had not been part of any official negotiation process and that discussions had focused on the release of political prisoners, the opening of the political space, a review of the composition of the Independent National Electoral Commission, the issuance of passports for some opposition members in exile, their repatriation in one group, the cancellation of arrest warrants for some exiled opposition members, and the provision of security guards for those who would return to Burundi. The statement also underscored that the Nairobi meeting would be the last until the current election cycle was completed, in 2020. In reaction, the Spokesperson

for CNARED, Onésime Nduwimana, rejected the Ombudsman's communiqué, insisting that negotiations had taken place between CNARED and a government delegation, with the blessing of the Government of Burundi.

15. On 5 October Mr. Niyonkuru arrived in Burundi for a short visit. On 7 October, following a meeting with the Assistant to the Minister of the Interior, Tharcisse Niyongabo, he announced that he was in Burundi to discuss the return of all exiled members of CNARED. On the same date, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior told the media that exiled political leaders under prosecution could return to Burundi but would account for their alleged crimes and be judged upon their return.

16. It should be recalled that on 10 September, eight former members of CNARED¹ had created a new opposition platform in exile named the Coalition des forces de l'opposition burundaise pour le rétablissement de l'Accord d'Arusha. In a statement issued on 23 August in which they had called for a postponement or a boycott of the elections, they had noted that preparations for the elections were taking place in a climate of fear and shrinking political space and had highlighted hate speech, acts of harassment and restrictions on civil and political rights, such as the freedom of expression. They had also regretted that the East African Community-led dialogue had not brought about the expected results.

17. In the same context, in a letter read out in churches across the country on 21 September, the Conference of Catholic Bishops of Burundi pointed out efforts to "suffocate and assault certain political parties and to persecute their members". The Conference expressed concerns about intolerance and political violence in the run-up to the May 2020 presidential election, adding that criminal acts go as far as politically motivated killings against persons who hold different views from those of the Government. They further accused the Imbonerakure of committing atrocities and "taking the place of security forces". The President's Communications Adviser and the Secretary-General of CNDD-FDD accused the bishops of "spitting their venomous hatred through incendiary messages on the eve of the elections, ... sowing division ... and spreading hatred among the faithful".

18. On 17 August, CNDD-FDD celebrated "Imbonerakure day". In Bujumbura, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Mayor of Bujumbura, the Secretary-General of CNDD-FDD, the Senior Communications Adviser in the Office of the President and other government officials attended the event, which has been organized every year since 2017. Various sources reported that, while marching through different neighbourhoods in Bujumbura, the Imbonerakure chanted slogans in which they denounced, among others, the "critics who work with colonizers and smear their names in international organizations". Some members warned against repeating the events that had led to the crisis in 2015, and invited opposition members to join CNDD-FDD. Other slogans reiterated the Imbonerakure's support for President Nkurunziza, while threatening the opposition. In his address to supporters in Kanyosha, on the outskirts of Bujumbura, the Secretary-General of CNDD-FDD impressed upon the Imbonerakure to always give priority to dialogue and to reassure young people from other political parties that the objective of Imbonerakure was the development of Burundi. He also reminded them that Burundi was their shared legacy and that they should maintain good-neighbourliness with other youth groups.

¹ Frédéric Bamvuginyumvira of the Sahwanya-FRODEBU party and former Vice-President of Burundi; Leonidas Hatungimana, former Spokesperson of President Nkurunziza; Charles Nditije of the UPRONA opposition party; Jérémie Minani, President of the Rassemblement des démocrates burundais; Chauvineau Mugwengezo of the Union pour la démocratie et le développement (UPD)-Zigamibanga; Jean Bosco Ndayikengurukiye, President of Kaze – Forces pour la défense de la démocratie; Prosper Nzobambona, President of the Nouvelle alliance pour la démocratie et le développement du Burundi; and Julien Nahayo.

19. With regard to the East African Community-led inter-Burundian dialogue, government officials have consistently stated that the dialogue is over and complained of interference by some members of the international community in the domestic affairs of Burundi, while stressing that the focus of the dialogue was on preparations for the general elections. The opposition, on the other hand, continually criticized the region and the international community for their inability to compel the Government to participate in an inclusive dialogue, without preconditions, while calling for a last session of the inter-Burundian dialogue.

Preparations for elections

20. On 28 June, the Chair of the Independent National Electoral Commission announced the calendar for the 2020 elections during a meeting attended by government officials, representatives of political parties and civil society, and other stakeholders, including members of the international community. The Chair urged all stakeholders to refrain from inflammatory speeches, political intolerance and any other acts of violence that could disrupt the process. The calendar provides the dates of all elections as well as a time frame for the submission of applications for candidates, the verification and review of their applications, possible appeals and the announcement of results.

21. As prescribed in the Electoral Code, elections of the President, members of the National Assembly and councillors of communes will take place on 20 May 2020, following a campaign period of 21 days, from 27 April to 17 May. The Independent National Electoral Commission will release the provisional results for the three elections on 26 May, while the final results will be announced by the Constitutional Court on 4 June. In the case of a run-off election, the second round of the presidential election will be organized on 19 June, and the final results will be released on 3 July. The President-elect will be sworn in on 20 August. Senatorial elections are scheduled for 20 July 2020, and the results are expected on 4 August. The ruling CNDD-FDD party welcomed the timetable. Sahwanya-Front pour la démocratie du Burundi (Sahwanya-FRODEBU), CNARED and the Mouvement d'actions patriotiques (MAP)-Burundi claimed that the current environment was not conducive to free, fair and transparent elections.

22. On 23 July, in Bujumbura, the Chair of the Independent National Electoral Commission updated representatives of civil society organizations, including religious leaders, on preparations for the elections. He called upon national and international organizations that wished to play a role in the electoral process, either as observers or as civic education officials, to register with the Commission between 24 July and 2 August. Its Commissioner, Anastase Hicuburundi, outlined the conditions that would apply to local and international organizations that would like to act as observers, stressing that local organizations must also indicate the source of their funding as well as the identity of their donors, to avoid illicit funding that could damage the credibility of the elections. The Chair of the Commission stated that Burundians living abroad would be able to vote in 33 countries where Burundi has embassies and consulates. He also announced that there would be another voter registration exercise in December to include those who had turned 18 and were not able to register in 2017, including refugees that had returned to the country.

23. The Chair of the Independent National Electoral Commission convened a similar meeting on 23 August to brief the leaders of political parties, representatives of religious denominations and civil society organizations on the steps taken to establish the Commission's local offices (the provincial and communal electoral commissions) and the requirements to apply for membership. He announced that candidates must be Burundian nationals, hold a university degree or the equivalent and not belong to the executive body of a political party.

24. Participants requested that the provincial and communal electoral commissions be chaired by representatives of religious groups or civil society organizations, rather than representatives of political parties. On 17 September, the Chair of the Independent National Electoral Commission announced that the provisional list of 155 members of the provincial electoral commissions had been posted in the various provincial offices. The Rassemblement national pour le changement and Sahwanya-FRODEBU leaders complained that the representation of political parties in the provincial electoral commissions was not equitable, deploring the fact that their parties had only one representative each, while parties such as UPRONA and CNL had about 18 representatives each. Subsequently, the Spokesperson for FRODEBU expressed doubts about the credibility of the elections, deploring the lack of independence of the Commission.

B. Socioeconomic and humanitarian situation

25. The socioeconomic situation did not improve during the period under review. The World Bank estimated the country's economic growth at 1.8 per cent in 2019, compared with 1.7 per cent in 2018. According to the National Statistical Institute of Burundi, inflation rose from 5.4 per cent in August 2018 to 6.7 per cent in August 2019. The overall State budget for 2019–2020 shows a deficit of F Bu 189.3 billion (14.26 per cent), compared with a deficit of F Bu 163.5 billion for the same period in 2018–2019. The planned expenditure is F Bu 1,516.4 billion, while revenues are estimated at F Bu 1,323.1 billion. Priority is given to operating costs, and investments in the energy and mining sectors, agriculture, education and decentralization are prioritized. Further investments are required for the health sector (currently 10.8 per cent of the budget, compared with a target of 15 per cent).

26. The shortage of foreign exchange in Burundi is growing. Currency inflows from January to July 2019 were estimated at \$92 million, compared with \$94.6 million during the same period in 2018. This decrease is related to the drop in prices for coffee and tea. Reserves increased slightly in August 2019, at 0.9 months of imports, compared with 0.7 months during the same period in 2018.

27. Overall, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance has decreased from 3.6 million in 2018 to 1.8 million in 2019. Of the nearly 1.8 million people currently in need, 710,000 have been targeted for multisectoral assistance in 2019.

28. At the same time, there has been a sharp increase in the number of malaria cases, with over 6.5 million cases reported in the first eight months of the year, representing a 125 per cent increase as compared with the same period in 2018. The cholera epidemic continues to affect several localities at the edge of Lake Tanganyika and on the Ruzizi plain. According to the World Health Organization, 795 cholera cases, including 6 deaths (of which 5 occurred in Bujumbura city), were recorded from 1 June to 4 October.

29. In August 2019, the Governments of Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania signed a bilateral agreement to repatriate all Burundian refugees from the United Republic of Tanzania, with the aim of dispatching convoys of 2,000 returnees per week as from 1 October 2019, with or without the participation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The returnees will also require support beyond the scope of humanitarian assistance to ensure their reintegration into their communities. On 22 August 2019, UNHCR and the United Nations Development Programme presented the joint refugee return and reintegration plan to representatives of the Government of Burundi, chiefs of United Nations agencies and partners involved in the implementation of the plan. The budget required to support repatriation and reintegration activities amounts to \$77,863,883.

30. Since 15 June, 8,000 Burundian refugees have returned to Burundi through the voluntary return process, bringing the total number of returnees since the beginning of the year to 19,000. According to UNHCR estimates, some 116,000 Burundian refugees were expected to return through that process in 2019. It should be recalled that the voluntary repatriation process started in September 2017, and some 78,000 Burundian refugees have returned to Burundi, mainly from the United Republic of Tanzania. Over 57 per cent of the returnees are children, and 52 per cent are women and girls. In terms of internal displacement, some 109,372 people remain displaced within the country, down 3 per cent since June 2019; 77 per cent have been displaced as a result of natural disasters, and 23 per cent as a result of social and political tensions.

31. The humanitarian response is severely underfunded, with only 40 per cent of the required \$106.2 million received through the humanitarian response plan. The most underfunded sectors include health, water, sanitation and shelter. The regional refugee response plan is also underfunded, with only 18 per cent of the required funds received thus far.

32. With the ongoing Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi remains in a high-priority category for the risk of Ebola. Important progress was made during the reporting period to prevent the spread of the Ebola virus, including the launch of an Ebola vaccination campaign; however, gaps remain. According to the most recent assessment, conducted in July 2019, preparedness levels have gone up from 11 per cent to 72 per cent as at September 2019. Some \$11.9 million, or 56 per cent, of the required \$21.5 million for preparedness activities has been received to date. Priorities for the rest of the year include the further strengthening of surveillance activities, laboratories, case management, infection prevention and control and water, sanitation and hygiene at the health facility level, risk communication and community engagement, operations, vaccination and coordination.

33. As at mid-2019, 30,000 of the projected 60,000 cases of severe acute malnutrition had been admitted to treatment centres, a similar caseload to that observed in mid-2018. Food insecurity affects at least 47 per cent of households, of which 15 per cent are experiencing severe food insecurity. A food security and nutrition assessment shows a decrease in chronic malnutrition from 56 per cent to 54 per cent, which represents a sizeable improvement in nearly two years. The Government has made extraordinary progress in its fight against malnutrition, with the formalization of a costed multisectoral and multi-year nutrition plan that should be launched in the coming months and will continue to optimize the collective response later in 2019.

34. On 20 June, in a letter sent to all international non-governmental organizations, the Ministry of Finance requested, *inter alia*, information on the ethnicity of their national staff. That letter came after international non-governmental organizations had been requested to submit similar data during the fourth quarter of 2018. A total of 94 such organizations were registered with the Ministry of the Interior between October 2018 and July 2019.

35. The Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission continued its work during the reporting period, with a principal focus on promoting dialogue on the socioeconomic situation of the country. On 12 June, the configuration held a meeting during which its Chair gave a briefing on his visit to Burundi in May 2019. He underlined the imperative of maintaining the focus of attention on the socioeconomic development agenda and called for sustained international support for the national development plan. In a briefing from Bujumbura, the Resident Coordinator, a representative of the World Bank and a representative of the United Nations Children's Fund provided an update on their ongoing engagement with the

Government to address nutrition needs and stressed the need for follow-up after a joint high-level event held by the World Bank and the Government on the theme “Investing in nutrition, investing in the future” on the margins of the Spring Meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank Group. The Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support noted the ongoing impact of projects supported by the Peacebuilding Fund in Burundi, in particular the role of women mediators in resolving disputes at the local level.

36. During the reporting period, the Peacebuilding Fund continued to implement projects, through United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, totalling \$16.3 million. Project interventions included providing paralegal training for women mediators to increase their capacity to resolve conflicts at the local level, increasing access to rights and services for returnees, internally displaced persons and their host communities and fostering dialogue and a commitment to non-violence among young people across the political spectrum.

C. Human rights

37. Although noticeable efforts have been made by the Government to improve the security situation, the human rights situation remains a source of grave concern. There are consistent reports of human rights violations and abuses surfacing from a variety of public sources. In those reports, it has been noted that the victims of human rights violations are predominantly members of opposition political parties or opposition coalitions, those perceived as opponents to the ruling party, members of civil society and those who contested the third term of the President and voted against the amendment to the Constitution of 7 June 2018. The national intelligence service, the police, local administrative officials and the Imbonerakure are cited as the main perpetrators.

38. Discoveries of unidentified bodies also continue to be reported by some human rights organizations. In its quarterly report on the period from May to July 2019, the exiled Ligue burundaise des droits de l’homme (Ligue Iteka) reported several cases of killing, forced disappearance, torture, arbitrary arrest and gender-based violence. Victims included women (33 cases) and young people and minors (21 cases). The lack of an independent investigation by the Government to bring justice to the victims and their families has raised concerns over the sentiment that the perpetrators benefit from impunity.

39. The independent media persistently report on acts of political intolerance and harassment, in particular against members of CNL, the main opposition party. During the period under review, the independent media reported 110 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention, 37 cases of intimidation, including arson and destruction of offices of CNL, and 27 cases of ill-treatment and 11 cases of killing of members of opposition parties, mainly members of CNL. On 19 June, human rights defenders denounced the prolonged detention of a representative of CNL and his counterpart from the Front pour la démocratie du Burundi (FRODEBU), in the province of Muyinga, for their alleged involvement in a clash between young people representing CNL and FRODEBU and the Imbonerakure on Rukira colline. At the same time, one of the magistrates in Muyinga reportedly told the media that justice was being delayed in the case owing to political interference. Meanwhile, two houses belonging to members of CNDD-FDD were reportedly ransacked by members of the opposition parties in a reprisal attack.

40. On 18 July, the Government adopted two decrees creating an interministerial monitoring and evaluation committee on international non-governmental organizations operating in Burundi, as well as recruitment committees to monitor the

recruitment of national staff by international non-governmental organizations. Those measures have been strongly contested by exiled representatives of the anti-corruption watchdog group Observatoire de lutte contre la corruption et les malversations économiques and the civil society organization Forum pour le renforcement de la société civile, which denounced an ever more restricted space for the rights of expression and association.

41. The Government has refused to acknowledge such human rights violations. Since the closure of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Burundi on 28 February 2019, the Government has shown no commitment to maintaining any form of cooperation with the Office. Every initiative by OHCHR to engage in discussions with the Burundian authorities has remained unattended. However, OHCHR continued its engagement with Burundi through the OHCHR Regional Office for Central Africa in Yaoundé, which has carried out several capacity-building activities since May 2019. Discussions between OHCHR and the Government will continue, with the aim of securing a framework of cooperation that will make it possible, to some extent, to report on the protection of human rights in the country.

42. On 19 August, the tribunal in Bururi sentenced 12 members of the dissenting wing of the Union pour la démocratie et le développement (UPD)-Zigamibanga party who had been arrested in Buta, Bururi province, on 11 August for holding a secret meeting. Three of them, including a judge and a lawyer, were sentenced to 30 years of imprisonment, and nine others to 20 years, after the prosecutor accused them of planning to overthrow national institutions, using as evidence a video recording shown in court. Chauvineau Mugwengezo, the honorary Chair of the party, currently in exile, argued that the imprisonment of the members of his party illustrated the political intolerance of CNDD-FDD and called for their unconditional release.

43. On 4 September, the Human Rights Council-mandated Commission of Inquiry on Burundi released its report on the human rights situation in Burundi ([A/HRC/42/49](#)), highlighting that a few months ahead of the 2020 elections, fear and intimidation prevailed for those who opposed the ruling CNDD-FDD party, and that serious human rights violations continued to be committed by the Imbonerakure, agents from the national intelligence service, the police and local authorities. The report identified eight risk factors for atrocity crimes in Burundi and called upon the Government to put an end to the human rights violations. Although the Commission has made repeated requests, the Government of Burundi has once again refused any cooperation with the Commission, and government officials dismissed the Commission's findings as unfounded.

44. Between January 2019 and September 2019, Centre Humura, one of the centres providing services to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, reported 875 new cases. Women's rights to succession and inheritance are denied and remain highly politicized, with women representing only 17 per cent of titled landowners. While the constitutional 30 per cent quota for representation has been reached and surpassed in the National Assembly (36.4 per cent) and the Senate (47 per cent), women's representation in decision-making at local levels remains low. They represent 17 per cent at the level of hill councils (2015 elections), 32.7 per cent of heads of communes, and 6.4 per cent of heads of hills. Humanitarian action needs to integrate more women and girls, given that 66 per cent of returnee households are headed by women, according to UNHCR data from July 2019.

45. According to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Civil Service, Labour and Employment, more than 50 per cent of young people were unemployed in December 2018. The adolescent population is growing faster than the rest of the population and faces a high level of vulnerability, elevated health risks and low education and skill

levels. As such, investing in adolescents is critical to the future of the Burundian economy.

D. Security developments

46. On 18 June, an armed attack was reported in Gihanga, in the province of Bubanza. According to witnesses, the attackers targeted a group of police officers and Imbonerakure on patrol in the area. On 6 July, two explosions were heard in the vicinity of the office of the Chief of Staff of the Army.

47. Several incidents of killing of individuals by either military or police officers were also reported, but not often corroborated by independent sources. On 11 July, the shooting and killing of two presumed opposition members by the Bubanza Police Commissioner while they were in police custody triggered accusations of extrajudicial killing. The incident had reportedly occurred in front of a crowd in Gihanga commune. On 15 July, a police spokesperson denied the allegations of extrajudicial killing, claiming that the victims were members of a criminal gang and that the police had acted in self-defence. Pictures posted on social media showed the victims alive with their hands tied behind their backs.

48. From 14 to 20 June, an attack by an unidentified armed group on the military position in Gisagara commune, in the province of Cankuzo, was reported. A similar attack on a police position by an unidentified armed group was reported by local sources on 22 July in Gisagara commune, with two civilians reportedly injured. The Administrator of Gisagara commune reportedly said that the group was composed of eight men, and that their main objective had been to kill an Imbonerakure leader living in the area. The exchange of fire with the police had lasted about two hours, and the attackers had reportedly retreated across the border to the United Republic of Tanzania.

III. Activities of the Special Envoy and his Office

49. The former President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Benjamin Mkapa, presented his final report on the East African Community-led inter-Burundian dialogue to the twentieth Ordinary Summit of Heads of State of the East African Community, held on 1 February 2019 in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania. The Summit received the report and decided to conduct further consultations on the inter-Burundian dialogue process. In that context, in an attempt to help revitalize the dialogue, my Special Envoy undertook consultations with the leaders of the region, the African Union Commission and other stakeholders.

50. On 23 August, my Special Envoy met with the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, the mediator of the East African Community-led inter-Burundian dialogue. At the meeting, he presented a three-point non-paper in which he (a) suggested a meeting of the guarantors of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi to reaffirm the centrality of the Agreement to the stability of Burundi; (b) recommended that the East African Community, the African Union, the United Nations and partners continue joint efforts towards credible and peaceful elections in 2020, including a possible role for the United Nations; and (c) called for strengthening the joint technical working group bringing together the East African Community, the African Union and the United Nations. The mediator discussed several challenges that had prevented significant progress in the dialogue, especially since the twentieth Ordinary Summit of Heads of State of the East African Community. Nonetheless, he reiterated his commitment to continuing his mediation to help bring lasting reconciliation and stability to Burundi.

51. My Special Envoy also held meetings with the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, John Pombe Magufuli, former President Mkapa, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Rwanda, Richard Sezibera. During those meetings, he discussed his non-paper, among other matters.

52. During the period under review, the Office of my Special Envoy continued its interactions with all Burundian stakeholders, in particular government officials, and the international community, with a view to helping to build confidence and foster an environment conducive to political dialogue. Several interlocutors shared their fear of violence erupting as the country enters the electoral period, in view of increased political intolerance, hate speech and the continuing deterioration of socioeconomic conditions. The Office also continued to regularly consult the heads of diplomatic missions, exchanged notes on the situation in the country and discussed joint efforts in support of the region. Moreover, the Office continued to support the efforts of the region, notably through the joint technical working group.

53. On 23 July, the Office of my Special Envoy met with the Secretary-General of the East African Community to seek his views on the inter-Burundian dialogue and the prospects for cooperation with the United Nations during the 2020 electoral period. The Secretary-General stated that the secretariat of the East African Community would provide electoral assistance to Burundi and intimated that the United Nations could consider playing a role in support of the East African Community.

54. Further to the visit by my Special Envoy in May of this year, from 5 to 9 August, his Office consulted Ugandan and Tanzanian officials, as well as representatives of the African Union in Burundi and some members of the joint technical working group, to explore ways of reinvigorating the region's efforts to address the situation in Burundi. To that end, on 19 August, the Office of my Special Envoy attended a meeting in Kampala convened by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. The meeting adopted a memorandum that was subsequently submitted to the mediator for his consideration.

55. From 26 to 31 August, the Assistant Secretary-General for Africa visited Burundi and met with government officials, including the First Vice-President, two of the country's former Heads of State and the Secretary-General of CNDD-FDD. She also met with representatives of political parties from the Majorité présidentielle and the opposition, the diplomatic community, the heads of United Nations agencies, representatives of youth and women's organizations, and representatives of religious denominations. While in Burundi, she was invited by the First Lady to discuss the latter's social and humanitarian activities, including her efforts in the area of peace consolidation. The Assistant Secretary-General exchanged views on the need to strengthen the relationship between Burundi and the United Nations, among other issues, and discussed ways to consolidate peace in the country through preventive diplomacy, notably the inter-Burundian dialogue. Her informal interaction with a broad cross-section of Burundian society helped to amplify messages of genuine partnership, trust, direct contact and mutual respect. It contributed to underscoring the confidence of the United Nations in a stable and secure future for Burundi and reiterating the readiness of the United Nations to support the realization of that potential. It is my hope that her visit bodes well for further political engagement with the Government of Burundi and other national stakeholders.

56. On 2 October 2019, the Office of my Special Envoy met with the Deputy Secretary-General of CNDD-FDD to discuss the situation in the country and cooperation between the United Nations and Burundi. The Deputy Secretary-General reiterated the position of the Government that the external dialogue had concluded and that, should the United Nations contemplate supporting any dialogue, it should support the ongoing dialogue between the Government and political parties, initiated

by the First Vice-President and the Minister of the Interior. He underlined that, in order to prevent foreign interference in the internal affairs of Burundi, the Government would not resort to requesting external funding assistance.

IV. Observations and recommendations

57. I aspire to see a transformed landscape in which all Burundians feel secure and protected, in which participation in the political process is freely accessible to all without restriction or fear, and in which political and social discourse is conducted with mutual respect, inclusive dialogue and accommodation, in the best interest of Burundi and its people. I wish to see an irreversible trend towards human development, equitable economic growth, the rule of law and adequate public services for the people of Burundi. I hope that Burundi will rapidly realize its immense potential, allowing it to take its proper place as an example of renewal and stability in the Great Lakes region and the international community.

58. I am encouraged by the signs of positive change that have emerged over the past 12 months, although I remain deeply troubled at the continuing reports of human rights violations and fragility. It is encouraging that there has been some improvement in the overall security situation nationwide; the establishment of new political parties with the active encouragement of the Government; the decision of the Government, aimed at avoiding election-related violence, to establish nationwide mixed committees that will include young people from all political parties; the commitment by political parties to consult on all challenges facing the country within a forum of political parties, on the condition that it be an inclusive forum; the recent visit to Bujumbura by the Secretary-General of CNARED to assess the conditions for the possible return of political leaders in exile; and the discussions held in Nairobi by the Ombudsman and a CNARED delegation.

59. I acknowledge the far-reaching significance of the repeated commitment of President Nkurunziza to respect the constitutional limits of his office. Public statements by government officials in which they deplore and condemn violence and repression are also welcome. Furthermore, there are signs that the Government may be reaching out to opposition actors and encouraging those in exile to return to join the political process. I see those examples as opportunities that Member States and the United Nations must encourage.

60. While I note that the security situation has improved across the country over the past 12 months, incidents of violence and violations of human rights continue to occur, and in some of them, political opponents of the Government and the ruling party, including innocent civilians, have been targeted. As I indicated in my previous report, I believe that there is an opportunity to conduct an inclusive political dialogue that would help to restore trust and build consensus on the roles and responsibilities of security agencies before, during and after the elections. I urge the Government to commit to an inclusive dialogue, with a view to agreeing to and implementing confidence-building measures and ensuring compliance with the rule of law by security forces. I also urge the Government to undertake an urgent reform of the judiciary and to protect and guarantee the independence of all judicial personnel.

61. The Secretariat has been informed of a recent bilateral agreement between Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania to repatriate 280,000 Burundian refugees beginning on 1 October. While I appreciate the efforts of the Government to encourage the return of refugees, it is important to reiterate that repatriation must be voluntary. I urge countries hosting refugees to abide by the provisions of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. I call upon the Government of Burundi to respect its obligations and for all partners to ensure that the conditions for the sustainable

reintegration of returning refugees are met. I also express my appreciation to refugee-hosting countries and to donors and partners who provide assistance to refugees.

62. The human rights situation in Burundi remains a matter of concern for the international community. I call upon the Government to fully cooperate with the Human Rights Council Commission of Inquiry on Burundi and to rebuild a positive working relationship with OHCHR. I also call upon the Government to conduct impartial, independent and effective investigations into serious allegations of violations and abuses of human rights, so that perpetrators are swiftly brought to justice and victims, in particular victims of sexual violence, are allowed access to effective remedies and adequate reparations. In the light of persistent allegations of political intolerance, I urge the Government to take concrete steps to address hate speech and to condemn all forms of intolerance and violence. In the light of the risk factors reflected in the report of the Commission of Inquiry, I urge the Government to take urgent steps to address the underlying and root causes of potential instability.

63. The national development plan includes the objective of transforming the Burundian economy for strong, sustainable, resilient and inclusive growth. Although there have been a few signs of economic recovery, the socioeconomic situation remains precarious and a matter of concern. Addressing economic challenges will require renewed efforts to restore confidence and trust between the Government, development partners and the donor community, among others. In this context, I welcome the signing of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework by the Government of Burundi and the United Nations on 25 January, as well as the readiness of donors to re-engage.

64. The United Nations remains a partner to Burundi and will do its utmost to support the country as it seeks durable solutions to its political and socioeconomic challenges. The United Nations has no other agenda than assisting Burundi in strengthening democracy, consolidating peace and stability and achieving sustainable socioeconomic development for the well-being of all Burundians. I encourage the Government to work constructively with the United Nations in Burundi. In particular, I urge the Government to finalize the long-overdue status-of-mission agreement with the Office of my Special Envoy.

65. All Member States should continue to extend the hand of genuine partnership to the Government and people of Burundi and to support them on the path to durable peace, security and stability. We must continue to engage with the Government and all stakeholders in Burundi and the region. We must also require the opening of the political space and adherence to all obligations relating to fundamental rights and freedoms for all Burundians. At the same time, our activities should reflect a keen understanding of the particular challenges confronting Burundi and should be conducted in a manner that fosters trust, mutual respect and genuine partnership.

66. Burundi is a few months away from general elections, which are to be held two years after a constitutional referendum by which the presidential term was extended to seven years. Many stakeholders in Burundi and beyond are concerned that the amendment of the Constitution runs against the spirit and the letter of the Arusha Agreement. I call upon all Burundian stakeholders, in particular the Government and the ruling CNDD-FDD party, to come together and work in the greater interest of the people of Burundi to preserve the Arusha Agreement, by which peace was restored in 2000 after a decade of civil war.

67. The inter-Burundian dialogue, launched in March 2016 under the aegis of the East African Community, has yet to make significant progress towards the resolution of the crisis that erupted in connection with the elections in 2015. Meanwhile, the Government is preparing for the upcoming general elections and has adopted relevant legislation and administrative decisions. Those measures, while contested by the

opposition, suggest that there remains a possibility of further changes in the political system that may contribute to bridging the gap between Burundian stakeholders.

68. Conducting the general elections in an environment of tension and mistrust poses a risk of violence that can only be prevented or mitigated through a meaningful and inclusive dialogue. I urge all Burundian parties, in particular the Government, to engage in an inclusive dialogue in good faith under the aegis of the East African Community, to bring lasting reconciliation, stability and development to the country. I commend the mediator, President Museveni, for his commitment and express my gratitude to former President Mkapa for his tireless efforts during his tenure as facilitator.

69. I welcome the consultations on the way forward in the inter-Burundian dialogue undertaken by the mediator, including on the suggestions put forward by my Special Envoy, ahead of the upcoming East African Community Summit. The United Nations will continue to support the efforts led by the region. In view of the current status of the inter-Burundian dialogue and the fast-approaching general elections scheduled for 20 May 2020, I propose the following two steps to continue to carry out the tasks entrusted to me by the Security Council in its resolution [2303 \(2016\)](#):

(a) To focus on working with all Burundian parties to develop confidence-building measures to improve the human rights and security situation and foster an environment conducive to political dialogue, pursuant to para. 8 (i) and (iii) of resolution [2303 \(2016\)](#);

(b) To continue to support ongoing regional efforts, with a view to revitalizing the East African Community-led inter-Burundian dialogue, pursuant to para. 8 (ii) of resolution [2303 \(2016\)](#).

70. This approach will be carried out in such a manner that the ongoing internal dialogue taking place in Burundi ahead of the elections can complement and reinforce the broader efforts led by the East African Community. The United Nations will continue to consult with the Burundian parties, the East African Community, the African Union and other partners in this regard.

71. I wish to express my gratitude to my Special Envoy and his Office for their determination to assist the Burundian people. I also appreciate the efforts of all other United Nations entities in Burundi, which implement their mandates sometimes in difficult conditions. The United Nations will continue to work with the people and the Government of Burundi, in close cooperation with regional and international partners, to put the country on a steady course towards lasting political stability and sustainable development, in line with the Arusha Agreement.
