

Council conclusions on Burundi

1. Despite all the efforts of the international community, the situation in Burundi remains deadlocked. The country is the scene of recurrent violence and violations and abuses of human rights. The European Union (EU) strongly condemns any use of force to solve the crisis in Burundi. The lack of the prospect of a political solution increases the risk of hardening positions and violent confrontation. The situation is likely to be worsened by the country's economic fragility. In that context, the EU reiterates the priority it attaches to protecting and supporting the population.
2. Only an inclusive political dialogue, under international mediation and in compliance with the Arusha Agreement and the Constitution of Burundi, can provide a solution to the crisis. The EU commends the mediation efforts of the East African Community (EAC), which helped to organise the first inter-Burundian dialogue meeting on 28 December in Entebbe. The inter-Burundian dialogue must be resumed urgently in a truly inclusive framework and without preconditions. The EU calls on all parties, and in particular the Burundian authorities, to subscribe to that approach.
3. The EU takes note of the decisions adopted by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), at its 571st meeting, held on 29 January 2016, at the level of Heads of State and Government. The EU welcomes the AU's decision to dispatch a very high level AU delegation to Burundi to meet with the highest authorities of the Republic of Burundi, as well as with other Burundian stakeholders. It should travel to Burundi as quickly as possible in order to launch consultations on the inclusive inter-Burundian dialogue. The EU welcomes the entreaty to all Burundian stakeholders to respond, unconditionally and without delay, to the call of the mediator for the continuation of a genuine and inclusive dialogue. The EU is also encouraged by the AU's strong condemnation of all acts of violence, whoever the perpetrators, and its condemnation of the persistence of impunity.
4. The EU welcomes the visit of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to Burundi on 21 and 22 January 2016, and stresses the importance attributed by the members of the UNSC to the need for a political solution for Burundi, supported by an international presence in the country. In that context it welcomes the work of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General. The EU supports the increased involvement of the UN, AU and EAC in mediation efforts, and reiterates its commitment to supporting mediation.
Recalling the need for the international community to be able to cope with a worsening of the situation, the EU stresses the importance of continuing work in that regard and reiterates its commitment to supporting the steps taken by the UN and the AU to prepare coordinated emergency plans.
5. The EU will adopt the appropriate measures necessary in view of the lack of positive signals. The fact is that consultations under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement, held in Brussels on 8 December, were not able to remedy Burundi's failure to respect essential elements of the partnership. The full participation of the Government of Burundi in the inter-Burundian dialogue, as requested by the UN Security Council and the AU's Peace and Security Council, is essential. Any other step towards de-escalation and political opening will also be a very significant positive signal. The EU, which is one of Burundi's main development partners, confirms its willingness to continue its support for the Burundian population through its development activities.
6. The EU remains ready to fund humanitarian actions to assist the Burundian population and calls on the authorities to ensure immediate, safe and unhindered access for humanitarian workers in Burundi.
7. The recent attacks by armed rebel groups against law enforcement officials and the country's institutions are unacceptable, as is the disproportionate use of force in retaliation by the internal security forces. The EU expresses its solidarity with all the victims of violence.
8. The EU points out that any individual involved in acts of violence and violations or serious abuses of human rights, including incitement to hatred, must be held responsible and brought to account in a court of law. The EU draws attention to the restrictive measures it adopted on 1 October 2015 and stands ready to impose restrictive measures against those whose actions might have led or might lead to acts of violence and repression, serious human rights violations, and/or might hamper the search for a political solution within the framework proposed by the AU and the EAC.
9. The EU remains extremely concerned by the increasing number of reported cases of violations and abuses of human rights, some of which involve the security forces. The reports from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the alleged existence of mass graves, cases of sexual violence, arbitrary detentions, disappearances and summary executions are alarming and call for full clarification through the establishment of a thorough, impartial and credible investigation.
10. In addition, the EU expresses its deep concern about the continued intimidation and harassment of representatives of the opposition and civil society. It reminds the Burundian Government of its international obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in particular regarding the respect of fundamental freedoms and the rule of law and

the handling of court cases, in particular the right to a fair and impartial trial. It encourages the Burundian Government to guarantee freedom of expression as well as freedom of the press, enabling Burundian and foreign journalists to investigate and report without hindrance or intimidation. The opposition must refrain from the use of violence.

11. In this regard, the EU fully supports the deployment of AU experts and the dispatch of an expert mission by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in accordance with the resolution adopted by the UN Human Rights Council at its extraordinary meeting on 17 December 2015. Taking also into account Burundi's recent election at the UN Human Rights Council, the EU calls on the Burundian authorities to facilitate immediate deployment of these experts and the expert mission; it considers that their presence will help de-escalate the situation and protect the population.
12. Significant progress has been made in cooperation and development in the Great Lakes Region in recent years. The crisis in Burundi calls into question recent progress. The EU calls on countries in the region to show responsibility and contribute to a solution to the crisis, and not to support the activities of armed movements in any way.

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