



# UNITED NATIONS TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL



LIMITED

T/COM. 3/L. 2  
6 August 1952  
ENGLISH  
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

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## COMMUNICATIONS FROM DR. R. VAN SACEGHEM AND MR. E. RABAUD CONCERNING RUANDA-URUNDI

Note by the Secretary-General: In accordance with rule 24 and supplementary rule F of the rules of procedure for the Trusteeship Council and in accordance with paragraphs 9 and 10 of the Report of the Committee on Examination of Petitions (T/L.243 and Corr.1) approved by the Trusteeship Council at its 397th meeting, on 13 March 1952, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the Trusteeship Council and to the Government of Italy as the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of Somaliland, two communications dated 29 May and 12 June 1952 from Dr. R. Van Saceghem and Mr. E. Rabaud, concerning the Trust Territory of Ruanda-Urundi.

League for the Rights of Man  
and for the New Democracy.

Ligue des Droits de l'Homme  
et de la Democratie Nouvelle

Kisenyi, 29 May 1952.

Headquarters: Kisenyi  
Post Office Box No.5  
Ruanda-Urundi

BY AIR

The President of the Trusteeship Council,  
United Nations,  
New York.

Sir,

We have been interested to hear that a plebiscite, aimed at granting the peoples of Trust Territories an opportunity to acquire the right of self-determination, is to be held under the auspices of the United Nations.

The Indian proposal recommending the plebiscite is fully in accordance with the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We have duly consulted the representatives of various European/Asian groups and also the notables and emancipated indigenous inhabitants of Ruanda-Urundi on this question.

It seems that the information to be submitted to you by the governing authorities, which do not in actual fact represent the indigenous inhabitants or the permanent settlers in the country, will be incomplete. The inhabitants of this country have no political rights at all. An Administration with dictatorial powers governs and not the chosen representatives of the people. For this reason we feel that it would be useful for the United Nations to carry out an inquiry on the spot, getting in touch not only with officials but with the qualified representatives of various ethnic groups.

We hope that, as in Somaliland and Bali, Indonesia, conferences under the auspices of the United Nations and with the co-operation of the country's non-governmental organizations will be held in Ruanda-Urundi as soon as possible.

I have the honour, etc.

(signed) Dr. R. Van Saceghem,  
President.

(signed) E. B. ...  
Secretary

Received at United Nations Headquarters 12 June 1952.

/League

League for the Rights of Man  
and for the New Democracy.

Ligue des Droits de l'Homme  
et de la Democratie Nouvelle

Kisenyi, 20 June 1952

Headquarters: Kisenyi  
Post Office Box No. 5  
Ruanda-Urundi

Mr. Ralph Bunche,  
Acting Assistant Secretary-General in charge of the  
Department of Trusteeship and Information from  
Non-Self-Governing Territories,  
United Nations, New York.

Sir,

My distinguished friend, Dr. Van Saceghem, President of our League,  
presents his compliments and wishes me to thank you for transmitting his  
petition to the Trusteeship Council,

We have been glad to note that, at the suggestion of the Indian representative,  
and in spite of opposition by the Colonial Powers, the United Nations has accepted  
the idea of holding a plebiscite in the Trust Territories. This plebiscite,  
which we feel is fully in accordance with the principles of our League, would  
appear to be causing deep concern to the European inhabitants of Ruanda-Urundi  
because the indigenous inhabitants are socially very backward. We note that  
fact though we do not place the entire responsibility for it on the peoples  
concerned.

For some time, however, these peoples have not been living as tribes.  
Dominated by an aristocracy composed of the pastoral Batutsi, they have had a  
social organization which, although basically feudal, was nonetheless a type of  
political State. In spite of their backwardness, the Belgian administration  
they have had for the past twenty-five years has given these peoples a general  
idea of what a modern and democratic (?) State is like.

Although we agreed, in the presence of your colleagues of the mission to  
Africa who did us the honour of receiving us, that a democratic regime would not

/be achieved

be achieved by entrusting the entire administration of the country to the Batutsi alone, we also stated that the dual system at present in force would not lead to such a regime either. We added, however, that there was no dearth of progressive Batutsi and Bantu elements and that, in co-operation with the Europeans and Asians inhabiting the country, and under the direct control of the Trusteeship Council, we could soon achieve the type of government desired.

Speaking frankly, neither the Administration as a body nor the majority of the colonists living under the present system want this to happen, except perhaps in a hundred years' time! Unfortunately for them, the general evolution of the outside world will no longer allow of such a delay. A decision as to the future of Ruanda-Urundi should not be based on biased opinions.

We have therefore recently communicated to the President of the Trusteeship Council our Committee's wish that a conference should be held as soon as possible under the auspices of the United Nations before a plebiscite takes place. The conference, like that held in Italian Somaliland last year, should be composed of delegates and representatives of the country's various ethnic and economic groups. We attach herewith a copy of our communication in case the two copies sent previously have been intercepted by the censorship, and we ask you to submit them to Mr. de Urena, President of the Trusteeship Council.

Should our proposal be accepted we should be happy if you would take part in the conference and also a representative of UNESCO, such as our friend Mr. Jean Thomas, or his distinguished colleague, Dr. Metraux, with whom we are already in contact. It would also be desirable for a leading member of the Commission on the Status of Women, such as Miss Bernardino, compatriot of Mr. de Marchena, to attend in order to judge for herself the deplorable status of the women.

Will you kindly remember us to Mr. de Marchena and his colleagues of the August 1951 mission? Please tell them that we are greatly distressed at receiving neither a reply to the letter we sent to Dar-Es-Salaam nor the documents relating to the United Nations and the Trusteeship Council which they promised to send us. As defenders of human rights in a Trust Territory it is of the greatest importance that we should be among the first to receive news of the Organization's discussions. We receive a copy of all human rights documents

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published by the Economic and Social Council and should consequently receive Trusteeship Council documents which are of special interest to us.

Relying upon your kindness, we are, etc.

For the Committee: (Signed) E. RABAUD

Secretary

Member of the League for the Rights of Man  
and for the New Democracy

Member of the French League

Member of the International League against  
Racial Discrimination

Received at United Nations Headquarters 7 July 1952.

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