



# Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

**8652**<sup>nd</sup> meeting

Wednesday, 30 October 2019, 3.40 p.m.

New York

*Provisional*

---

<i>President:</i>	Mrs. Pandor . . . . .	(South Africa)
<i>Members:</i>	Belgium . . . . .	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
	China . . . . .	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire . . . . .	Mr. Moriko
	Dominican Republic . . . . .	Mr. Trullols Yabra
	Equatorial Guinea . . . . .	Mr. Esono Mbengono
	France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
	Germany . . . . .	Mr. Licharz
	Indonesia . . . . .	Mr. Syihab
	Kuwait . . . . .	Mr. Alduwaisan
	Peru . . . . .	Mr. Duclos
	Poland . . . . .	Ms. Janiak
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Polyanskiy
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Clay
	United States of America . . . . .	Mrs. Craft

## Agenda

The situation in Burundi

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Burundi (S/2019/837)

---

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).

19-34095 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



*The meeting was called to order at 3.40 p.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation in Burundi**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Burundi (S/2019/837)**

**The President:** In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Burundi to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, and His Excellency Mr. Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2019/837, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Burundi.

I now give the floor to Mr. Kafando.

**Mr. Kafando** (*spoke in French*): I welcome the opportunity that you have granted me, Madam President, to brief the Security Council as it considers the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Burundi (S/2019/837). I would first like to congratulate you, Madam, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October and to convey greetings to the other members of the Council.

Today's briefing is on the document entitled "Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Burundi", which was published on 24 October and has already been submitted for the Council's consideration. The first part of my briefing concerns some observations drawn from the report. The second part provides an update of my work on the inter-Burundian dialogue. In the third part, I will make some recommendations on the need for the United Nations to maintain its presence in Burundi.

With regard to observations from the report, I would like to note that, in many respects, the situation in Burundi remains tense. During the reporting period, an increase in the level of political intolerance and a growing threat to civil and political freedoms were observed. Fortunately, the Government responded by establishing a framework for political dialogue, bringing together political parties, local administrators and representatives of the security forces. That initiative should be encouraged and supported, as should the life sentences given to four perpetrators of the 18 August murder in Muyinga of a member of the Congrès national pour la liberté, as well as the ongoing discussions between the National Council for Respect for the Arusha Agreement and the Rule of Law (CNARED) and the Government with regard to the return of political leaders in exile.

The second observation is about the electoral process, which, as Council members know, is managed by the Independent National Electoral Commission. It is hoped that process will be transparent. Poorly organized and contested elections, as we all know, are always a source of conflict.

The third observation pertains to the socioeconomic situation. There is no need for an in-depth analysis: the situation continues to deteriorate.

The fourth observation focuses on the security situation, which, it must be admitted, has improved throughout the country, although abuses and other human rights violations continue to be reported here and there. In any case, it is appropriate to encourage the Government to meet its obligations to guarantee at all costs the safety of all of its citizens and to put an end to impunity.

The fifth, and last, observation is related to the humanitarian situation, which also remains a matter of concern. We must nevertheless welcome the voluntary return of thousands of refugees to the country, while ensuring that their return and reintegration are carried out with dignity.

The inter-Burundian dialogue under the auspices of the East African Community has still not taken place four years after it was launched, undoubtedly due to a lack of political will on the part of the parties as well as, it must be said, firm commitment by States of the subregion. However, the dialogue would have allowed for an inclusive new Burundi in the future, thereby

avoiding the doubts and continual stumbling blocks that we have seen in the past.

However, the twentieth Ordinary Summit of Heads of State of the East African Community, held in Arusha on 1 February, decided that the mediator would undertake further consultations in order to convene and conclude the dialogue. Unfortunately, nothing has changed.

In the context of that uncertainty, I have once again undertaken consultations with leaders of the region, starting with President Yoweri Museveni, the mediator, who met with me at his residence in Uganda on 23 August. During our talks, he unequivocally affirmed to me his willingness to continue the mediation together with President Kagame, Chair of the East African Community, as well as the other Heads of State of the region, but also with the support of the United Nations, whose continuing critical support he requests.

Having completed those recent steps, it is the right time for me to conclude my mandate as Special Envoy for Burundi. In fact, last June I notified the Secretary-General of my intention to leave. But my meeting with the mediator, scheduled by him originally for 19 July but which in the end took place in August, discouraged me from officially announcing my decision. Today, I confirm it.

I can say that, while we did not manage to conclude the dialogue process in Burundi, the role of the United Nations is far from having been insignificant. We have indisputably helped to raise awareness among the leaders of the region that stability in Burundi is a crucial requirement for comprehensive peace in the region as a whole.

With that important point that I have just made, namely, the United Nations ongoing commitment to Burundi, allow me to briefly describe, if only by way of accountability, the main activities undertaken under the mandate entrusted to me.

Since my appointment by the Secretary-General on 5 May 2017 as Special Envoy for Burundi, I have spared no effort to assist the facilitation and the region in completing the inter-Burundian dialogue process. In that regard, on several occasions, I made visits to the region and consulted key leaders, including the mediator and facilitator, as well as the Burundian stakeholders.

On many occasions, I also met with the authorities of the African Union to raise their awareness and

request their commitment to finding a consensus-based solution in Burundi. I also have approached some African Heads of State, always for the same purpose.

In the two and a half years of my work, I was received once by President Pierre Nkurunziza. More exactly, it was the day after my appointment, on 27 June 2017. The hopes raised by that first meeting with the Head of State of Burundi, particularly on issues related to dialogue and cooperation with the United Nations, including the signing of the status-of-mission agreement, have unfortunately still not been fulfilled.

During my periodic visits to Burundi, I had working sessions with the main political actors and leaders, both from the opposition and the ruling party. I also had meetings with representatives of civil society, of religious denominations and of women's and youth organizations and of course with accredited diplomats in the country. I met with members of CNARED in Brussels to persuade them to participate in the dialogue, which was the only way for them was to work on the renewal and reconstruction of their country. My Office in Bujumbura has established cooperative relationships with all parties concerned, particularly with representatives of the Government and of the international community and the main political actors.

Within the joint technical working group set up to support the facilitator's efforts, my Office has provided significant technical, logistical and financial support, thereby contributing to the convening of several consultations, including plenary sessions of the dialogue, in Arusha and Entebbe.

The multifaceted support of my Office and my personal engagement with the facilitator and the mediator have often helped to remove certain political and technical obstacles and made it possible to continue the peace process in Burundi.

Since taking up office, I have had the opportunity to report regularly to the Council on developments in the situation in Burundi. I appreciated members' comments, advice and encouragement. As I conclude my mandate, I would like to thank them in that regard and for their assistance and constant and comprehensive support. I thank the Secretary-General for the trust he has placed in me throughout my term. I thank Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. I would like to thank all my colleagues, in particular the staff of the Office of the Special Envoy in Bujumbura and of the Department

of Political Affairs and Peacebuilding here in New York. I thank the authorities and the people of Burundi. In a word, I express my sincere gratitude to all those who have facilitated my work over the past two years.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Kafando for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lauber.

**Mr. Lauber** (Switzerland): On behalf of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), I thank the Security Council for inviting me to brief it as well as for the excellent cooperation between the Council and the Peacebuilding Commission.

In line with established practice, the following statement has been approved by the members of the Burundi configuration of the PBC, including the country concerned, Burundi. I had the opportunity to provide an overview of the configuration's engagement with Burundi to the Council during the informal interactive dialogue held on 28 August. On that occasion, I highlighted that the discussions in the configuration reflect the shared commitment to continue supporting Burundi leading up to 2020 elections and beyond with a view to the consolidation of peace and promoting inclusive socioeconomic development.

On 27 September, on the margins of the opening of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, I was received by His Excellency Ezéchiel Nibigira, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burundi, for a bilateral meeting. Our discussions centred on the next steps in terms of peacebuilding activities in Burundi, including my next visit to the country as Chair of the PBC Burundi configuration. I said that the configuration will continue serving as a platform for dialogue on cooperation between Burundi and its international partners in support of the implementation of Burundi's national development plan. I also highlighted the importance of preventing a slowdown in socioeconomic programmes as the 2020 elections draw closer. Furthermore, I underscored the need for peaceful, free, fair and inclusive elections and suggested that the PBC can serve as a platform for identifying activities that support an environment conducive to such a process. The Minister for Foreign Affairs indicated that the Ministry of the Interior of Burundi recently convened meetings between the ruling party and the opposition parties, including the Congrès national pour la liberté, and that the Government issued a call for tolerance to all political actors.

On previous occasions I have underlined the importance of ensuring that the PBC's engagement complements and is coherent with that of other actors, including the Security Council, member States of the region and the United Nations system as a whole. In line with this approach, I continue engaging with key interlocutors on developments in Burundi. I recently had the privilege of exchanging thoughts with the Secretary General of the East African Community, Ambassador Libérat Mfumukeko; the Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, Ms. Bintou Keita; and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, Mr. Michel Kafando, who is also in the Chamber today. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the Special Envoy for our excellent working relationship and for his support, advice and commitment.

Let me now turn to the developments in Burundi that are relevant from a peacebuilding perspective, and to what they mean for the configuration's engagement. First, the preparations for the 2020 general elections continue to shape the political context in the country. Burundian Government representatives have underlined on several occasions that President Nkurunziza will not stand as a candidate in the upcoming elections. The ruling party, the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie, is expected to choose its presidential candidate in early 2020. According to media reports, several politicians belonging to opposition parties have recently returned to Burundi for discussions on their repatriation and the current electoral process. At the same time, reports of alleged human rights violations and incidents of damage to infrastructure belonging to political parties have raised concerns over the democratic space ahead of the elections.

During the configuration's previous meeting, on 12 June, the Permanent Representative of Burundi, Ambassador Albert Shingiro, informed PBC member States about the advanced state of preparations for the elections, including the Government's adoption of the Kayanza road map, the establishment of the National Independent Electoral Commission, the adoption of the electoral code in April and the publication of the electoral calendar in June. The Burundi configuration has further been informed of the passing of the 2019-2020 budget law, which provides for the financing of the 2020 elections with domestic resources. In parallel, the configuration can serve as a platform for identifying assistance for activities falling outside the operational



budget for the elections that might contribute to fostering an environment conducive to peaceful, free, fair and inclusive elections.

Secondly, the voluntary return of Burundian refugees from neighbouring countries is critical to peacebuilding, particularly at the community level. At the configuration's most recent meeting, the Permanent Representative of Burundi informed members of the return of large numbers of Burundians to the country from neighbouring Tanzania. Member States have consistently called for these returns to be organized in full respect of international law and underscored the principles of voluntary, dignified and safe return. The PBC has also served as a platform for highlighting the persistent funding needs for supporting the voluntary and dignified return of Burundians from neighbouring countries, with the assistance of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as well as multi-agency efforts aimed at enabling the sustainable integration of returnees.

Thirdly, socioeconomic cooperation remains key to reducing vulnerabilities, strengthening resilience and improving disaster preparedness and response in Burundi. Cooperation in relation to implementing the Ebola response plan has brought together the Government of Burundi and technical and financial partners, including international non-governmental organizations, in a multi-sectoral, multi-partner approach centred around a key concern for the Burundian population. PBC member States have indicated their wish for an intensification of dialogue with the Government of Burundi at the strategic and sector-specific levels in support of the implementation of Burundi's development priorities. The configuration also continues to serve as a platform for bringing partners, including the World Bank, together in pursuit of common objectives spelled out in the relevant strategic frameworks and in line with the national development plan.

Finally, the effective and meaningful inclusion of women and youth in public life and their full participation in decision-making on the future of their country is a crucial factor for sustaining peace. The second iteration of the International Conference of Women Leaders, convened by the First Lady of Burundi, Mrs. Denise Nkurunziza, from 24 to 26 October, called on women to follow their destiny, take courage and act, as the consolidation of peace is their business. In line with the PBC's gender strategy,

member States have also expressed their support for the empowerment of women in Burundi. The PBC can play a further role — and should in fact intensify its efforts — in support of initiatives aimed at preventing conflict and mitigating tensions at the community level. The importance of such initiatives in promoting dialogue and reconciliation extends beyond the electoral period, as it serves to strengthen resilience and preserve the gains achieved through the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi.

The Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) supports projects that strengthen local dialogue, social cohesion, reconciliation, conflict resolution and prevention, the empowerment of women and youth and the voluntary reintegration of refugees. The total budget for operational projects approved under the PBF is slightly over \$14 million. As the testimonies of Burundian women mediators have made clear, support for the participation of women in peace processes must take a broad approach that includes the strengthening of women's economic autonomy through revenue-generating activities.

I intend to pursue my mandate for the PBC Burundi configuration in line with the priorities and recommendations that have received the support of the member States of the configuration, including possibilities for the PBC to accompany Burundi along the path towards free, fair, inclusive and peaceful elections in 2020, as well as the continuation of the socioeconomic dialogue with the Government and its international partners. In close cooperation with my Burundian counterpart, I will continue to promote the PBC as a platform for dialogue and exchange between Burundi and a broad range of member States and partners within the United Nations system and beyond. In close cooperation with the Burundian authorities, I am also preparing a visit to Burundi. As usual, I will seek to engage with a broad range of interlocutors, from Government representatives and political parties to civil society, women and youth, economic actors and international and regional partners.

Allow me to conclude with the following observations and recommendations. First, I encourage the United Nations to remain engaged in Burundi through an integrated approach, drawing on the strengths of each entity and striving towards policy coherence in order to consolidate peacebuilding gains and stay alert to the risks that jeopardize these gains.

Secondly, the Government of Burundi, political parties and other stakeholders, with the support of the member States of the subregion, the African Union and the United Nations, should work together in order to create an environment conducive to the holding of peaceful, free, fair and inclusive elections, including efforts aimed at ensuring the full realization of all human rights.

Thirdly, I call on all Member States to increase their support for projects and initiatives aimed at reducing violence and mitigating tension, including at the community level, throughout the election cycle. I will continue to encourage the configuration to serve as a platform for identifying further possibilities to scale up this support.

Fourthly, funding is urgently needed for the 2019 joint refugee return and reintegration plan. This inter-agency response plan is designed to offer safe and dignified repatriation to Burundian refugees returning from the subregion and to promote their resilience and sustainable reintegration. I call on Member States to give maximum support to this comprehensive plan, which is exemplary in leveraging synergies among existing humanitarian and development plans, including Burundi's national development plan, with a view to ensuring sustainable reintegration. Continued assistance is equally needed to maintain humanitarian standards in refugee camps in order to guarantee that return remains an entirely voluntary decision.

Fifthly, through the configuration, I will pursue efforts aimed at sustaining international support for the implementation of the national development plan and at assisting dialogue between the Government of Burundi and its bilateral and multilateral partners around the priorities identified in the plan.

I thank Council members for their interest and continued support for the PBC.

**The President:** I thank Ambassador Lauber for his briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister for International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa.

We thank the former President of Burkina Faso, Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, and Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their insightful briefings on the

evolving situation in Burundi and for their unwavering commitment to the process.

South Africa takes this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Burundi for his tireless efforts aimed at leading the supportive role of the United Nations in the inter-Burundian dialogue being led by the East African Community (EAC). We thank him for his role in engaging with all the stakeholders in the Burundi process and for working with all Burundian parties to develop much-needed confidence-building measures to improve the human rights and security situation in the country. His work with the Government and the East African Community leadership has fostered an environment conducive to political dialogue and an all-inclusive reconciliation process.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Burundi (S/2019/837), which reflects on the most recent developments in the country. We take note of the proposed suggestions on how best to enhance an inclusive dialogue and the possible role of the United Nations in the run-up to the general elections scheduled for 20 May 2020. This would bolster the efforts of the East African Community, which is charged with the responsibility of overseeing the Burundi process.

South Africa continues to fully support the EAC-led process in the spirit of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, with the support of the African Union (AU) and the United Nations. We welcome the recent engagement between President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, as the mediator of the process, and Special Envoy Kafando on 23 August. We note with interest the three-point non-paper, which speaks to strengthening mediation efforts and injecting much-needed momentum into the Burundi process. In that regard, the work of former President Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania remains invaluable. We look forward to the leadership of the East African Community and the African Union in charting the course on Burundi with the assistance of, and in coordination with, the United Nations.

South Africa urges the Council to continue to coordinate its positions with those of the AU Peace and Security Council when dealing with African issues. Africa has very clearly defined regional organizations that deal systematically with issues related to African peace and security. We maintain that it is only through an inclusive dialogue that we can address any political

impasse in Burundi and that this requires that the international community support the East African Community initiatives. There should be an environment conducive to dialogue among the key stakeholders in the East African Community-led process.

As a guarantor of the Arusha Agreement and as part of the legacy of former President Nelson Mandela, we in South Africa will always stand ready to support the Government and the people of Burundi as they consolidate peace, as well as to assist with the development of their country. We congratulate the Government of Burundi on initiating a number of preparatory processes for the elections, especially the establishment of the National Independent Electoral Commission, the adoption of the Burundian electoral code and the publication of the 2020 election calendar. Furthermore, the establishment of new political parties and the decision by the Government to set up nationwide mixed committees to include the youth from all political parties in a bid to avoid election-related violence is to be commended. All parties must be permitted to canvass support countrywide without hindrance. There should be no no-go areas for any politician or political party.

South Africa welcomes the commitment by President Pierre Nkurunziza not to stand as a candidate for the presidential election in 2020, and we look forward to seeing the Government and political parties work together to hold inclusive and peaceful elections. Burundians must be the beneficiaries of free and fair elections that can deliver democracy and development with the assistance of the region. We are encouraged by the continued stable security situation in the country, and we commend the decision of the Government of Burundi to finance the elections with their national budget as its sovereign responsibility. However, we encourage Burundi to work closely with the East African Community and the African Union to deliver a truly conducive environment in the spirit of the Arusha Agreement.

We commend Burundi's contribution to international peace and security through its deployment of more than 6,000 Burundian men and women in various peacekeeping operations, mostly in the Central African Republic and Somalia. As a member of the African Union Peace and Security Council, Burundi is to be congratulated on remaining committed to the promotion of peace and security by contributing to silencing the guns in Africa.

South Africa remains gravely concerned at the dire humanitarian situation in the country. Nearly 1.8 million Burundians are in need of humanitarian assistance, with a large proportion suffering from malnutrition. We urge the Security Council and the international community to do more to alleviate the socioeconomic challenges and the humanitarian situation facing the people of Burundi and call on its partners to support the implementation of the national development plan for the benefit of the Burundian people.

We are encouraged by the ongoing voluntary repatriation of Burundian refugees, which since September 2017 has seen the voluntary repatriation of 78,000 refugees to Burundi. The increased return is a manifestation of a return to peace and stability in the country, and we call on the international community to provide assistance for their repatriation and reintegration, as the humanitarian response plan continues to remain severely underfunded.

In conclusion, we appeal to the Security Council and the international community to support the Government of Burundi and the East African Community mediation process as it lays the foundation for an environment that is conducive to the holding of democratic elections and to support a peaceful transfer of power in order to ensure peace and stability beyond 2020.

We thank Mr. Lauber and Mr. Kafando for their work and for their briefings to the Council today.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

**Mr. De Rivière** (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and the Ambassador of Switzerland for their briefings and, above all, for their work in support of peace and reconciliation in Burundi.

France would also like to see the rule of law and human rights respected in Burundi and for the country to experience development and growth and benefit from the current momentum in the Great Lakes region. The 2020 elections will be a crucial moment; only the organization of free elections will allow Burundi to find its way back to stability. The electoral deadlines must be prepared for by consensus, with the trust of all political actors and the population. President Nkurunziza's commitment not to stand for re-election

and the ongoing discussions with some political leaders in exile contribute to reduced tensions, but the violence against activists, the arbitrary arrest of journalists and members of the opposition and the acts of vandalism against the opposition party's offices must be condemned and stopped. France urges the Burundian authorities to prosecute the perpetrators and do everything possible to ensure that such acts are not repeated.

The guarantee of freedom of expression during the campaign, the opening of political space and the security of candidates and supporters of the various parties would be welcome. Such technical measures as electoral observation by citizens and transparency in vote counting could also help to build that trust. Several partners have indicated their willingness to support Burundi in preparing the elections if it so wishes. France strongly encourages the Burundian authorities to take advantage of this opportunity.

In parallel, France remains concerned about the persistence of human rights violations in the country as well as violence, including sexual violence, and the closure of the Human Rights Office in Burundi. We encourage the Burundian authorities to fully respect their international commitments in terms of protecting human rights. These measures are also necessary for holding inclusive and peaceful elections. In that regard, France will continue to monitor the humanitarian situation with great attention.

Beyond preparing the elections, and in the spirit of the Arusha Agreement, political dialogue remains necessary for the situation to be normalized. Such a dialogue will also help to build confidence in the electoral process and prevent elections from being held in an atmosphere of tension.

France encourages the East African Community to continue its mediation efforts and further calls on the Burundian authorities to engage in dialogue with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General. In the pivotal period ahead, it is important that the United Nations remain fully engaged. This heightened focus is justified both by the pre-electoral monitoring and by the risk that any deterioration of the situation in Burundi might pose for the region. That is why the Security Council cannot ignore the situation in the country.

The commitment of the Secretary-General and his teams remains more necessary than ever before. We fully support the recommendations of the Secretary-General. Accordingly, France urges Burundi to finalize

without delay the agreement on the status of the mission for the Office of the Special Envoy, as the Secretary-General has requested.

I would conclude by saying that we regret the Special Envoy's departure and that we share his opinion that the United Nations must continue its involvement in Burundi, and by extending a personal warm thanks to President Kafando.

**Mrs. Craft** (United States of America): I thank Special Envoy Kafando for his two and a half years of service promoting peace and stability in Burundi. His office has played an important role in working to stabilize the country and foster political dialogue. We look forward to working with his successor to support Burundi through credible elections and the peaceful transfer of power. I thank Ambassador Lauber for his briefing and his encouragement to continue the dialogue.

The Security Council is charged with maintaining international peace and security, but in so many cases what that really means is investing in the conditions that ultimately produce human flourishing. Simply put, it means investing in the futures of countries and their peoples.

The May 2020 elections are the key to Burundi's future. It is therefore critical that, as the representatives of France and Switzerland and the President have said, the elections be inclusive, free and fair. Women and young adults, opposition and ruling party leaders, civil society representatives, journalists, prominent political activists and refugees displaced by political violence all have an equal role to play.

We welcome President Nkurunziza's recent remarks affirming his commitment to peaceful elections and encourage the Government to take tangible steps towards this goal. One of those steps is to allow international and domestic election observers unfettered access to the election process.

An open and permissive political environment is also critical to credible elections. Political candidates from all parties should be free to campaign without threat of reprisal or interference. We are concerned by repeated attacks and harassment targeting members of opposition parties and reports of politically motivated violence and intimidation. For example, the recent destruction of the regional political offices of the Congrès national pour la liberté party will serve



only to repress opposition voices and undermine free expression. The extrajudicial arrests, beatings, acts of intimidation and kidnappings that have been reported are unacceptable in a free society. We call on all political parties and their supporters to campaign peacefully and reject violence.

Those convictions proceed from our broader belief that basic civic freedoms are essential to democracy. We urge the Burundian Government to respect the country's international legal obligations regarding rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and free association. Journalist, activist and civil society organizations must be allowed to operate independently, free from threats of intimidation and violence. All Burundian citizens should be free to participate fully and actively in the electoral process.

The voluntary return of Burundian refugees also remains a top priority for the future stability of the country and the region. These citizens are an integral part of Burundi's national fabric, and their active participation in political and civil civic life is needed now more than ever. We urge the Governments of Burundi and Tanzania to work closely with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), countries of the region and international non-governmental organizations to facilitate the voluntary, dignified and safe repatriation of Burundian nationals without threat or harassment.

While the United States urges Burundi to make needed investments in its own future, we are investing in that future as well. Every year we contribute more than \$50 million in bilateral aid, which touches the lives of nearly every Burundian citizen by supporting the health sector, economic growth and peacebuilding. We also partner with the World Food Programme, UNHCR and UNICEF to provide emergency assistance to Burundian and Congolese refugees, including children. We are encouraged by the remarkable progress that Burundian authorities have made in the fight against HIV and AIDS. While work remains to be done on malaria and Ebola preparedness, significant strides have been made, and we encourage the Government of Burundi to continue those efforts.

Developments in Burundi directly affect the entire Great Lakes region, which means that improving Burundi's human rights situation and holding free, fair and inclusive elections will brighten not only the future of Burundi but of all of Central and East Africa.

The United States will continue to invest in this better future, and we urge all Member States to do the same.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (The Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, and Mr. Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations and Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their detailed briefings.

I want to begin with a few words about the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/837) presented to the meeting today. I have to admit that we were stunned at the conspicuous speed with which it was prepared. The Secretariat's willingness to incur extra costs is particularly striking in the light of the current financial difficulties of the United Nations, which the Secretary-General has been anxiously pointing out to us. In future we urge the Secretariat to adhere firmly to the Council's resolutions and not to permit this type of extravagance.

Turning to the substance of the report, we were pleased that the security situation in Burundi has essentially remained unchanged since the holding of the informal interactive dialogue on Burundi at the end of August. The situation has continued relatively calm and is showing signs of stabilizing. The voluntary return of refugees continues. In that regard, we welcomed the signing in August of an intergovernmental agreement with Tanzania on repatriating Burundian citizens from there.

We note that the Burundian authorities are continuing to take steps to prepare for the country's central political event, the forthcoming presidential, parliamentary and regional elections to be held in May 2020. The electoral timetable has been agreed on and is being respected, funds for the elections have been allocated from the national budget and the list of political parties registered to participate is growing. We welcomed the August and September meetings held by Burundi's First Vice-President and Minister of the Interior with political-party and regional leaders on the preparation for the elections. We were especially pleased with the participation in the meetings of representatives of opposition parties, including the Congrès national pour la liberté. We also think that the public awareness campaign being conducted by the Chair of the Independent National Electoral Commission is helpful, and we urge Burundi's leadership to continue such efforts.

With respect to the incidents of violence detailed in the report, I would like to point out that in the interests of a more object portrayal of the situation, it would be appropriate to cite and consider the relevant statistics in the context of the situation rather than describing individual violations of human rights, an approach that would make the current trends seem less gloomy.

The primary reason for the dispute between Burundi's political forces long ago ceased to be an issue with President Nkurunziza's repeated announcements that he will not stand as a candidate in the forthcoming elections, while the ruling party, the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie, intends to announce its candidate early in 2020. We are pleased that the Burundian Government has taken steps to establish a dialogue with the opposition, and in that regard we welcome the meetings held in Nairobi and Bujumbura with representatives of the exiled opposition platform, the 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.

We once again call for respect for Burundi's sovereignty. The Russian Federation is categorically opposed to interference in its domestic affairs and especially in the context of elections. It is our belief that what the Government of Burundi needs most right now is support for its efforts on the socioeconomic front. In that regard, we welcome the steps taken based on the approach of the country configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission to support the implementation of Bujumbura's 2018-2027 national development plan. In our view, further progress in that direction could help to restore economic assistance to Burundi in full accord with the calls made at the African Union Summits in Nouakchott in July 2018 and in Addis Ababa in February of this year, especially given that our African colleagues consider the measures taken to exert economic influence on Bujumbura to be equivalent to sanctions.

In general, we continue to believe that the Security Council's continued intense focus on Burundi is counterproductive and that it is high time it was taken off the Council's already overburdened agenda.

**Mr. Esono Mbengono** (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Republic of Equatorial Guinea would like to thank Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, for his detailed report on recent

developments in Burundi. We also thank Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for his informative briefing. I am also pleased to see my brother Ambassador Albert Shingiro, Permanent Representative of Burundi, here with us today.

We appreciate the efforts and work of the facilitator and mediator for the conversations throughout the inter-Burundian dialogue process and hope that President Museveni of the East African Community will continue his work.

Equatorial Guinea very much appreciates the spirit of reconciliation and tolerance that is currently evident in Burundi with the return home of exiled political leaders under guarantees for their security. To that should be added the approval of the Congrès national pour la liberté, a new opposition party led by Mr. Agathon Rwasa, as well as various negotiations being conducted both inside and outside the country for the return of political exiles and refugees. Together with the release of more than 3,000 prisoners, among them former insurgents during the violent demonstrations of 2015, as well as the return of more than 210,000 refugees since 2016 with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, those facts speak to the very positive evolution of the situation in our brother country in Central Africa. In that regard, we welcome the agreement signed with Tanzania. As the African Union did at its thirty-second summit of Heads of State and Government on 10 February, the delegation of Equatorial Guinea therefore warmly welcomes Burundi's major efforts to establish and consolidate the calm and political stability that currently reign in the country, which have resulted in its election to the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and show us that there is now a return to normality in Burundi following the destabilization attempts in the wake of the electoral process in 2015.

We welcomed the visit to Burundi on 31 August by Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa. We also consider the meetings held between various sectors of the population, the Government, political actors and members of civil society to be productive, and we welcome their recommendations to Burundi on improving relations with the United Nations, strengthening and invigorating the inter-Burundi dialogue and building peace through preventive diplomacy. I would like to point out that

Burundi is a major troop contributor to peace missions, having contributed more than 6,000 troops.

I also express our satisfaction at the high level of political will shown by the Government of Burundi in assuming 100 per cent of the costs of the electoral process, demonstrating once again its commitment to that process. Its willingness is also embodied by the appointment of new members to the Independent National Electoral Commission and the publication of the electoral calendar on 28 June, which establishes deadlines for the elections and addresses other procedural matters. In that regard, we would like to highlight that President Nkurunziza has decided not to stand as a candidate in next year's elections. We continue to encourage the Government of Burundi to continue leveraging and fostering inclusive dialogue among all the parties involved and interested in the establishment and strengthening of adequate mechanisms for the peaceful, transparent, credible and inclusive holding of elections in May 2020, in accordance with the Arusha Agreement, the Kayanza road map and democratic principles and values, whereby respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law prevails.

In conclusion, the international community must continue to resolutely support the Government and other parties directly involved in promoting confidence-building measures in order to guarantee an environment conducive to peaceful elections and the fulfilment of commitments to the Constitution and the Kayanza road map towards the peaceful transfer of power in an atmosphere of national peace and harmony, above all by providing financial support to the Government for the reintegration of refugees who are returning voluntarily and en masse to the country.

We believe that the positive evolution of events points to the need to remove Burundi from the Security Council's agenda. Both the Government and the people of Burundi deserve a vote of confidence from the international community and the Council, and the national sovereignty of Burundi must be respected.

**Mr. Trullols Yabra** (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful to the briefers for the information presented today, and especially to Special Envoy Kafando for his two and a half years of excellent service in favour of peace and stability in Burundi.

We would like to begin by referring to the upcoming electoral process, while underscoring the need for the Government and all stakeholders in the country

to foster an environment conducive to the peaceful holding of elections, avoiding any risk of the elections taking place in a climate of tension or distrust.

But, above all, any possibility of human rights violations must be avoided, in particular the limitation of the right to freedom of expression. We therefore note with concern the increase in acts of violence and political intolerance during the reporting period, including physical violence, arbitrary arrests and the intimidation of militants from political parties and journalists, among others. In that regard, we urge the Government of Burundi to make greater efforts to assure all citizens of their right to freedom of expression and association, especially with regard to political participation, and to reinforce physical security for those who wish to exercise their rights in a free and safe way. We urge it to secure a framework for cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in order to protect human rights in the country.

We note that the socioeconomic situation has yet to experience tangible improvement, with increases in both the rate of inflation and the State budget deficit. We therefore echo the call to keep our attention focused on the country's development, having as a frame of reference the priorities identified in Burundi's national development plan, with the support of the international community.

The number of malaria cases recorded in the country is especially alarming, with 6.5 million reported in the first eight months of the year, representing a significant increase compared to the same period in 2018. The number of deaths caused by cholera is also alarming. We applaud Burundi's efforts with respect to the significant improvement in its preparedness levels to mitigate possible outbreaks of the Ebola virus, as well as the reduction of chronic malnutrition rates from 56 per cent to 54 per cent in less than two years.

With regard to the situation of refugees, and in line with the Burundi regional refugee response plan of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, we reiterate that all returns must be voluntary, safe and dignified, while avoiding instances in which refugees feel pressured or threatened. It is important to highlight that the situation of Burundian refugees is currently the least financed worldwide. We therefore urge all stakeholders of the Tripartite Commission for the Voluntary Repatriation of Burundian Refugees to work arduously at its next meeting, to be held in

November, to promote initiatives that protect the rights of both refugees and displaced persons.

We underscore the idea that all activities by the United Nations and other regional entities and international partners must reflect a clear understanding of the challenges facing the people of Burundi and be carried out in a way that strengthens the bonds of mutual trust, respect and honest and transparent collaboration. We stress the need to consolidate the considerable progress achieved through the Arusha Agreement and its centrality for stability in Burundi.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize that peaceful, transparent and credible dialogue is the key element to achieving the political, social and economic stability that will strengthen democracy and build lasting peace in Burundi.

**Mr. Syihab** (Indonesia): At the outset, allow me to join others in thanking the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, Mr. Michel Kafando, and the Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ambassador Jürg Lauber, for their very comprehensive briefings. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Burundi (S/2019/837). We join in his hope for Burundi to be able to take its place in the region and the international community. Allow me to also take this opportunity to extend our appreciation to the Special Envoy for his invaluable work over the past two and a half years. We wish him the best in his future endeavours. I would like to make the following pertinent points.

First, long-lasting peace in Burundi can be attained only through mutual respect, inclusive dialogue and accommodation in the best interests of Burundi and its people, which includes inter-Burundian dialogue led by the East African Community (EAC). We note the Secretary-General's proposal to foster an environment conducive to political dialogue and to continue supporting regional efforts. We adhere to his call for the continuation of consultations among the Burundian parties, the United Nations, the EAC, the African Union and other partners. Dialogue is indeed necessary for the building of trust, including the trust of the international community. We join the Secretary-General in stressing the importance of creating the conditions conducive to the preparation of the upcoming elections in 2020. All efforts should be taken to ensure transparent and inclusive elections.

Secondly, Indonesia calls for increased humanitarian assistance to Burundi. It is worrisome that there are still 1.8 million people currently in need of humanitarian assistance. Around 116,000 Burundian refugees were expected to return this year. Food insecurity affects 47 per cent of households, 15 per cent of which are experiencing severe food insecurity.

There have also been sharp increases in malaria and cholera, with more than 6.5 million cases reported in the first eight months of the year — a number that represents a 125 per cent increase over last year. It is heartbreaking that, despite these increases, the Burundi regional refugee response plan is among the least-funded appeals in the world. I urge countries to continue their support and deliver on their commitments to Burundi.

Thirdly, we must ensure that Burundi does not relapse into conflict, including beyond 2020. The role the Peacebuilding Commission plays is crucial in that regard. We welcome the recommendations of the Peacebuilding Commission that encourage Burundi to work together with the United Nations and other partners to create an environment conducive to the upcoming elections, and we call on all Member States to increase their support to projects and initiatives aimed at reducing violence and mitigating tension, including at the community level. We also urge Member States to give maximum support to the 2019 joint refugee return and reintegration plan.

**Mr. Duclos** (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Special Envoy Michel Kafando for his valuable briefing and for the important work that he has carried out in recent years. We also thank Ambassador Jürg Lauber of Switzerland for his briefing.

Peru highlights the progress that the Government of Burundi has made in the preparatory processes for the 2020 general elections, in particular its publication of a detailed electoral calendar. We hope those actions will be complemented by further ones to ensure that the electoral process is inclusive, credible and transparent, in accordance with the Arusha Agreement, and that the measures will effectively restore the rule of law and democratic institutions in the country. Peru believes that, in order to do that, it is essential to banish all forms of intolerance and broaden the political sphere by involving the full and free participation of all actors in the political life of the country, including the political groups that are in exile. The success of those efforts will depend to a large extent on assistance of



the international community, and in particular on the monitoring and support that the African Union and the East African Community are able to provide, as they have a core responsibility in these processes.

On another note, Peru is concerned about the continued reports of human rights violations in Burundi and underscores the importance of establishing independent investigative mechanisms. We also call on the Government of Burundi to strengthen its cooperation with the various United Nations human rights protection mechanisms and with independent civil society organizations. We are also concerned about the delicate humanitarian situation in the country. Although there has been progress made towards preventing Ebola, there is an urgent need to undertake an effective response with a subregional focus with regard to the increase in reported cases of malaria and cholera. In the same vein, the already-critical situation of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons is being exacerbated by food insecurity. We believe that it is crucial to fully implement Burundi's national development plan for the period 2018 to 2027 and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for 2019 to 2023, which can act as relevant instruments for Burundi's medium- and long-term political stability and socioeconomic development.

We would like to emphasize the important role that the Peacebuilding Commission has played in the dialogue process on the socioeconomic situation of the country, particularly through its promotion of women as authorities in mediation and resolution of local conflicts. Both women and youth must play a greater role in the country's political processes.

I conclude by reaffirming Peru's commitment to achieving sustainable peace in Burundi in order to create regional stability. We also call on financial institutions and international donors to contribute to the achievement of this objective.

**Mr. Wu Haitao** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, and Ambassador Lauber, Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their briefings.

The current situation in Burundi is generally stable. The preparations for the country's 2020 elections have been steadily advancing. The National Independent Electoral Commission published the electoral calendar in June, while in July it updated its list of representatives

of civil society organizations that are involved in the electoral preparations. Progress has been made in terms of the return of Burundian refugees. The report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Burundi (S/2019/837) published on 24 October shows that 8,000 Burundian refugees have voluntarily returned to the country since 15 June. The overall security situation in Burundi has continued to improve. The Government and the people apparently have made achievements in pursuing peace and seeking development. China welcomes those developments.

The peace, stability and development of Burundi depends on the support and assistance of the international community. The Council and the international community should play a constructive role in helping Burundi achieve lasting peace and stability. In view of the current situation, China would like to emphasize the following three points.

First, we must respect the leadership of the people and the Government of Burundi on the issue of elections. Since the end of last year, in preparation for the 2020 elections, the Burundian Government has been actively engaged with the various parties in the country to establish the National Independent Electoral Commission and develop the electoral road map, and it has repeatedly promised to raise funds independently. These steps fully demonstrate the ability and determination of the Government and the people of Burundi to solve problems on their own. As elections fall within the realm of the internal affairs of a country, the international community should fully respect the choice of the Government and the people of Burundi.

Secondly, we must continue to increase humanitarian and socioeconomic assistance to the country. We hope that the international community and international partners will honour their commitments in a timely fashion by helping the refugees return to their homes and assisting the country as it relaunches its socioeconomic development, in line with the development plan drafted by the Burundian Government. The relevant international organizations and agencies should resume their economic cooperation with, and development assistance to, Burundi as soon as possible. China appreciates and supports the ongoing constructive assistance the Peacebuilding Commission and the country team are providing to Burundi.

Thirdly, the current situation in Burundi should be viewed objectively and fairly. The Government of

Burundi has stated on many occasions that Burundi no longer poses a threat to regional peace and security, and therefore should not stay on the Council's agenda. The Council should heed the country's views and make necessary adjustments in a timely manner and based on the latest developments, so that it can concentrate its energy on emergency situations that endanger international peace and security.

China has been actively supporting Burundi's political process and national reconstruction. Within the limits of our ability, we have provided assistance in many fields, such as agriculture, education and the building of infrastructure. We stand ready to continue contributing to peace, stability and sustainable development in Burundi.

**Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve** (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank Special Envoy Kafando and Ambassador Lauber for their briefings this afternoon. As Special Envoy Kafando's briefing was his last, I would like to thank and commend him for his efforts and the work he accomplished, which was often carried out under difficult conditions.

I would like to take this opportunity to address the situation in Burundi in the lead-up to its 2020 presidential, legislative and local elections. We take note of the latest developments with respect to the authorities' recent gestures of political outreach towards the opposition, on the one hand, and the measures that have been taken to prevent and combat violence that could jeopardize the holding of a credible electoral campaign, on the other hand. We also want to highlight Burundi's requests to various African partners, the East African Community and the African Union for support and training for the forthcoming elections. Belgium welcomes those measures and encourages the Burundian authorities to continue down this road in order to ensure that the elections can be credible, inclusive, peaceful and transparent. We also hope it will be possible to make further progress in the following areas.

First, we continue to encourage the entire population of Burundi to participate peacefully in the elections. While the release of political prisoners and the gradual opening of the political and media space may be important factors, lifting the legal proceedings against the political and civil-society leaders who want to return to Burundi would be a major step forward. Secondly, although we commend the authorities for the

recent measures taken to combat electoral violence, as I said, we remain concerned about the violent incidents, such as the one in Bubanza on 21 October, that have occurred from time to time during this period in the run-up to elections. Thirdly, it is also critical to ensure that this pre-election period not be marred by hate speech. Journalists, and the media generally, have an important role to play in that regard. Their right to information must not be limited, especially as the elections approach.

I also want to touch on the human rights situation. After reading the African Union's latest monitoring report, we are concerned. The report for September details a growing number of abductions and abuses, some of them brutal, by law enforcement personnel and the Imbonerakure, whose arbitrary arrests, targeting no fewer than 27 members of the Congrès national pour la liberté, including all of the party leaders in Karuzi, are very troubling. The party's offices have also been set fire to multiple times.

In conclusion, we note the latest developments and the measures taken by the Burundian authorities. At the same time, we must recognize that the road to the 2020 elections is still a long one. We therefore believe it is essential to ensure that the Office of the Special Representative can continue working with direct access to the Burundian authorities at least until the elections take place. The Office has an essential role to play and we have taken note of the latest report (S/2019/837), particularly its proposals on the activities of the Office between now and the elections.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that we remain ready for dialogue, bilaterally or at the European level, in order to support the Burundian authorities in holding credible, inclusive, peaceful and transparent elections.

**Ms. Janiak** (Poland): I would like to begin by thanking the briefers for their valuable presentations. I also want to take this opportunity to welcome the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/837), which provides a valuable factual record of the current situation in Burundi.

With regard to the political situation, Poland notes some signs of positive change in the country in the past few months, chiefly the registration of new political parties and the Government's efforts to enhance dialogue with the opposition. Those are steps in the right direction, in line with President Nkurunziza's repeated announcement that he will refrain from seeking a fourth

term in 2020, as he promised the Burundian people in 2015. However, we are worried about the reported increase in acts of political intolerance, vandalism and intimidation against the opposition. We believe that only inclusive political dialogue, held in good faith, can restore trust among the parties.

As the electoral process approaches, Poland calls on the Burundian authorities to open the political space, ensure the freedom of the media and comply with obligations relating to fundamental rights. In that respect, we think it will be crucial to address the doubts expressed by some members of the media in connection with the recent adoption of a code of conduct for the media during the electoral period. At the same time, we recognize the need for all parties, at all levels, to engage constructively in dialogue and to participate in the electoral process.

Poland welcomes the fact that the security situation across the country has improved and the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance has decreased, as the Secretary-General's report states. Nevertheless, Burundian society is still facing serious challenges, including a difficult socioeconomic situation and epidemics. We remain deeply concerned about the continuing reports of human rights violations. Poland urges the Government of Burundi to significantly increase its engagement in addressing hate speech and condemning all forms of intolerance and violence in the country. While we note the efforts that have been made so far, Poland emphasizes that it is the obligation of the authorities to guarantee, protect and promote fundamental rights, including freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. We therefore reiterate our call to the Burundian Government to take concrete steps to restore cooperation with international human rights mechanisms, particularly the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry on Burundi.

Bearing in mind the regional significance of the situation in Burundi, Poland strongly supports all the efforts made by the East African Community to date and encourages its leaders to engage more closely in discussions with the African Union and the United Nations. The constant and focused commitment of the region to achieving a regional consensus on the situation in Burundi is a matter of priority.

In conclusion, let me take this opportunity to thank Mr. Michel Kafando for his work as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi. His mission must continue so that the gains made so far are not lost. Poland also appreciates the efforts of the whole United Nations team and the other international institutions working on the ground to bring about a sustainable improvement to the lives of the Burundian people. We believe that fair and transparent elections in 2020, held in an inclusive environment and in the spirit of the Arusha Agreement, can still be a significant step in the political transformation of the country, and the people of Burundi can count on our support in that regard.

**Mr. Moriko** (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes the convening of this meeting and would like to thank Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, for his detailed briefing on developments in Burundi. We also thank Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for his briefing.

Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the generally stable sociopolitical environment prevailing in Burundi and the progress that has been made in the preparations for elections, including the Independent National Electoral Commission's publication on 28 June of the electoral timetable, which sets the date of the general elections for 20 May 2020.

We believe that only a calm sociopolitical environment and an inclusive process in a more open political space can guarantee the credibility of the election. In that connection, we welcome the efforts made by the Burundian authorities to raise awareness among the relevant stakeholders on best practices to be observed during the 2020 general elections, as evidenced by the meeting on 21 August organized jointly by the First Vice-President of Burundi and the Minister of the Interior, for the benefit of political party leaders, local authorities and representatives of the defence and security forces. We also encourage all stakeholders to throw themselves into supporting this positive momentum and urge them to join in the inter-Burundian political dialogue once again in the spirit of the Arusha Agreement. In that regard, my country calls on the United Nations and the African Union to continue to support the initiatives of the East African Community with a view to revitalizing the dialogue.

The issue of the voluntary repatriation of refugees and the return of internally displaced persons to their areas of origin is still one of the international community's core concerns. The fact is that despite the combined efforts of the Burundian authorities, the various humanitarian agencies and Burundi's partners, the number of refugees in neighbouring countries remains high at 325,671, according to estimates by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) published on 30 September. My delegation therefore welcomes the tripartite Burundi-Tanzania-UNHCR agreement, which according to UNHCR has facilitated the voluntary repatriation from Tanzania of at least 75,000 Burundian refugees since its signing in 2017, and we urge donors to support the initiative. We also reiterate our call for constructive dialogue between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Burundian authorities with a view to a lasting resolution of their disagreements.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire appreciates the significant contribution that Mr. Kafando has made to the implementation of the political process for stability in Burundi and thanks him for his personal commitment and for all his efforts over the past two years.

**Mr. Alduwaisan** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like at the outset to thank Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, and Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their valuable briefings. Today I would like to address three issues.

The first is the political situation. Since the Security Council's last official meeting on Burundi in June (see S/PV.8550), the political state of affairs in the Republic of Burundi has been improving. The Government has been working to calm the situation since the constitutional referendum was held on 17 May 2018, with the participation of most political parties. We hope these positive developments will continue until the vital presidential elections take place in 2020. We also hope that the elections will include all sectors of society with the participation of all political parties, and that they will be free, fair, transparent and credible. We also want to see the participation of civil-society stakeholders, including young people and women.

I welcome the Government of Burundi's efforts to move the political process forward, including by adopting

a road map for the upcoming elections and creating the Independent National Electoral Commission, as well as its decisions to fully finance the 2020 elections from the national budget and to publish an electoral calendar on 28 June. The President's announcement that he will not seek re-election is an important demonstration that the Government is serious about transferring power to a new president and convening the presidential elections a few months from now.

We commend the efforts of the African Union (AU) and the East African Community (EAC) to achieve a peaceful resolution of the political and security situations in Burundi through an inclusive dialogue based on the Arusha Agreement. We also hope that the member States of the EAC will step up their efforts and work with both the Government of Burundi and regional and international organizations, represented by the United Nations and the AU, to ensure the stability in Burundi that we all wish for.

My second point is about the security situation in Burundi, which in the past few months has been relatively calm and is improving, despite various continuing acts of violence and activities of armed groups. We sincerely hope that it continues to improve as it has since the beginning of the year. We also hope that the Government will take advantage of this improvement and the relative calm to intensify its efforts with regard to bringing all the political actors to the negotiating table in a national dialogue, given that the presidential elections are fast approaching.

My third focus is on the humanitarian situation and the return of refugees. There has been improvement in the humanitarian situation in Burundi compared with the two previous years, and we have seen a decrease in food insecurity. However, the situation is still critical, owing to continuing acts of violence and forced disappearances, in violation of human rights and international humanitarian law. We call for an end to such practices and for all perpetrators to be held accountable. With regard to the return of refugees, we commend the signing of the bilateral agreement between Burundi and Tanzania on repatriating 280,000 Burundian refugees. The Government of Burundi must intensify its efforts to ensure the socioeconomic reintegration of returnees while providing the necessary guarantees for the return of the remaining refugees.

In conclusion, social development and political reform are the chief factors that any Government must



contend with in order to develop and advance its society with a view to creating a secure future. The recent wave of reforms and changes in Central Africa and the Great Lakes region includes the successful elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the signing of a peace agreement in the Central African Republic on 6 February and the Government of Burundi's adoption on 22 August 2018 of a 10-year national development plan that extends to 2027 whose objectives are linked to the Sustainable Development Goals. All those are steps in the right direction towards achieving reform and improving standards of living and the economic situation for the people of Burundi, in particular, and the peoples of the region, in general. We therefore hope that the Government's efforts will lead to the successful holding of the upcoming elections and that the development plan will result in economic development and improved security, political and humanitarian conditions in Burundi.

**Mr. Clay** (United Kingdom): I would like to begin by thanking Special Envoy Kafando for his two and a half years of service in Burundi. Like others, we want to pay tribute to the important work of the Special Envoy and his office. The Office of the Special Envoy plays an integral role in helping to develop confidence-building measures and supporting efforts to create conditions conducive to political dialogue. I also want to take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Lauber for his detailed briefing.

I would like to welcome the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/837), which provides a valuable record of the current situation in Burundi. The United Kingdom wants to underline once again, as we and others in the Council have done before, the importance of regular written reports to the Council on the situation in Burundi that can inform our discussions. As we look ahead to elections in Burundi in May next year, the United Kingdom calls on all interested parties in Burundi and the wider region to help ensure that those elections are safe, credible and fully reflective of the aspirations of the people. Citizens must have faith in the electoral process if they are to accept the results of an election. Well-organized and credible elections are therefore vital for the stability of Burundi.

We encourage the East African Community to redouble its efforts to push for an effective and inclusive dialogue. A harmonized road map that all parties can support and that preserves the gains of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi is

crucial. We call on the Government and its constituent parties to continue to engage in dialogue with the region and thereby send a clear signal of their continued commitment to resolving the ongoing political crisis. We also urge the Government to finalize the status-of-mission agreement with the Office of the Special Envoy.

We note the overall improvement in the security situation, but the continuing incidents of violence and violations of human rights, some of which target political opponents, are deeply concerning. The latest report of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi (A/HRC/42/49) records continuing serious human rights violations committed in a general climate of impunity and of intensified suppression of civil liberties. That must stop. We are also concerned about the operating climate for the media, particularly with regard to the BBC and the Voice of America. A free press is essential to Burundi's stability during the election process and beyond.

Turning to the refugee situation, we believe that Burundian refugees should be able to return home, but that must be done on a voluntary basis and while ensuring that their ability to live in safety and dignity on their return is assured. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other actors in Burundi must be allowed to monitor the situation of returnees in Burundi, including their access to necessary services and their continued protection.

With elections taking place next year amid the fragile political and humanitarian environment and the implications for the broader security of the Great Lakes region, the United Kingdom believes that the situation in Burundi continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security. The United Kingdom therefore firmly believes that Burundi must remain on the Council's agenda.

**Mr. Licharz** (Germany): At the outset, I would like to thank Special Envoy of the Secretary-General Michel Kafando for his work and express deep appreciation for his efforts, including his latest consultations with leaders of the region in an effort to revitalize the inter-Burundian dialogue led by the East African Community. I wish President Kafando every success in his future endeavours.

When one is at the end of the list of speakers, there are a few advantages. One is the advantage of being able to be brief, as colleagues have already addressed the same speaking points. The second advantage is

that, when colleagues quote a report of the Secretary-General, one can double check.

In that regard, I would like to return to what our colleague from the Russian Federation said. He quoted the report (S/2019/837) in saying that the overall security situation has not deteriorated, and he was right. At the same time, our colleagues from Belgium and Poland cited attacks on members of political parties. I would like to recall that they included acts of vandalism and violent attacks against offices of the opposition party Congrès national pour la liberté. One of its offices was set ablaze in Nyabiraba, resulting in casualties. Numerous other such incidents are addressed in the report and were mentioned by colleagues.

In reading those findings, one cannot be but worried that the unresolved political crisis and the continuing volatile security situation in Burundi are resulting in tensions that risk endangering regional peace and stability. We are therefore of the opinion that the Security Council needs to retain Burundi on the agenda.

The 2020 elections will be crucial. Only the inter-Burundi dialogue can lead to a road map that sets the path leading to free, fair and inclusive elections. That is essential for building trust among the population and long-term stabilization. We therefore call on the Burundian authorities to show clear commitment in that regard. In that regard, I would like to revisit a sentence in your statement, Madam President. You said that there should be no no-go areas for political activities and parties, and I would like to stress that point.

The crisis in Burundi can be resolved only with regional actors. We therefore encourage them to take on a constructive role in creating new momentum leading to negotiations and dialogue. We are very concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation and the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Burundi. We encourage the Burundian Government to cooperate with the relevant international human rights mechanisms and humanitarian actors to increase humanitarian access and facilitate the transparent assessment of humanitarian needs.

We appeal to all parties involved to respect the principle of a voluntary safe and dignified return in accordance with the tripartite agreement signed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Burundi and Tanzania.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, under the leadership of Ambassador Lauber, for its efforts to improve the socioeconomic situation. Germany will fully support those efforts.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Burundi.

**Mr. Shingiro (Burundi)** (*spoke in French*): At the outset, my delegation warmly congratulates you personally, Madam President, and your country, South Africa, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October. Your extensive wealth of experience and your country's commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law have been at the heart of the success of your presidency, which began resoundingly on 1 October. Let me also welcome the presence among us of His Excellency Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General.

As the Council is undoubtedly aware, during the exchange between the Secretary-General and our Minister for Foreign Affairs on the margins of the General Assembly on 27 September, the two came together on a decision with regard to ending the Special Envoy's mandate in November. Accordingly, I would be remiss were I not to thank the Special Envoy for having provided his professionalism, diplomatic expertise and wisdom to Burundi and the region in the context of the peace process in Burundi. I can safely say today that he ably accomplished his mission. He leaves behind a peaceful, stable and definitively reconciled country. For our part, we wish him happiness and success in all his personal endeavours and pursuits for the benefit of the international community in the future.

Likewise, I must thank His Excellency Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for his briefing and for all he has done for Burundi with regard to the peacebuilding process. We reassure him of our full cooperation.

Before beginning the substantial part of my statement, I would like to note with regret that some delegations here continue to use the language of 2015 instead of evolving with the pace of events in Burundi. I encourage them to leave behind the status quo and follow the flow of what is now happening in the country.

My statement will focus on five points, namely, the political situation, which will be predominately

influenced by the holding of the 2020 elections, the security situation in the country, the humanitarian situation, with particular emphasis on the return of refugees, the human rights situation and cooperation between Burundi and the United Nations, on the one hand, and between Burundi and bilateral partners, on the other.

The political situation in the country is being shaped by preparations for the 2020 elections, which are progressing satisfactorily. National mechanisms dedicated to the holding of elections are already operational. While not citing an exhaustive list of the latter, I will cite in particular the following actions.

First, the Kayanza road map leading to the holding of peaceful elections in 2020 was adopted following very broad consultations within the Burundian political class. Second, the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) is already operational and is regularly holding press conferences on the progress of the electoral process in full transparency in the presence of members of the international community based in Bujumbura. Third, the revised electoral code was adopted by the National Assembly in April by 105 to 108 votes. Fourth, the Government adopted the decision to finance the entire operational budget for the elections without recourse to external resources, which, as the Council is aware, are often unpredictable and contingent on other factors. The fifth action was the Independent National Electoral Commission's publication of an electoral calendar detailing all polls planned for 2020. Sixth was the Commission's announcement of a period of partial voter registration for those who had been unable to register for the 2018 referendum. That partial registration for the electoral rolls will take place from 9 to 12 December, just about five weeks from now.

As the Council can see, Burundians are already deep into the 2020 electoral process, and we continue to take ownership of it both organizationally and financially. While promising free, transparent and peaceful elections, we would like to remind anyone who tries to interfere without being expressly invited that in Burundi as elsewhere in the world, electoral processes are an internal affair that is exclusively a matter for national sovereignty. Any outside support must be provided only at the request of the Government of Burundi and in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. And no support gives anyone the right to any such interference.

With regard to promoting an atmosphere conducive to the holding of peaceful and inclusive elections, among other things I would like to point to the expansion of the political space in the country through the approval of new political parties and the promotion of freedom of expression with the active support of the Government of Burundi; second, to the lifting of the suspension of opposition political parties that violated the law governing the functioning of political parties; third, our President's numerous announcements of his decision to voluntarily renounce his constitutional right to run in the 2020 presidential elections; fourth, the reception and reintegration of the large numbers of refugees returning to Burundi; fifth, the return to the country of opposition political leaders who fled the country in 2015, most recently on 5 October; sixth, the continued efforts to hold constructive political consultations within a forum of political parties in a spirit of openness and political tolerance, including at the levels of provinces and communes; seventh, increasing messages from political leaders to their followers focused on discipline, social cohesion and political tolerance; eighth, the Government's decision to create joint committees at the national level, including young people from all political parties, with a view to preventing violence during the elections; ninth, the commitment by political parties to consult regularly through the forum of political parties on all the problems facing the country; tenth, public statements by State officials deploring and condemning various isolated cases of violence and promoting social cohesion and peaceful coexistence; and lastly the release by presidential pardon at the beginning of the year of more than 2,000 prisoners, including young rioters and insurgents of 2015.

Still on the subject of elections, I would like to inform the Council that at the summit of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, attended by 120 member States in Baku on 25 and 26 October, the Heads of State and Government of the Movement called for the holding of free, transparent, inclusive and peaceful elections in Burundi in 2020. They congratulated the Government of Burundi on the steps it has already taken in preparing for these elections and welcomed its sovereign decision to finance the entire electoral process from the country's national resources.

At the continental level, the Summit of Heads of State of the African Union, held on 10 and 11 February in Addis Ababa, congratulated the Government of Burundi on starting preparatory processes for

the 2020 elections, particularly the creation of the Independent National Electoral Commission and a truth and reconciliation commission. It also welcomed the announcement by President Nkurunziza that he would not stand in the 2020 elections and urged the Government and the political parties to work together to ensure the smooth conduct of the elections.

With regard to security, as stated in paragraph 58 of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/837), the Government of Burundi has made significant efforts to improve security conditions in the country. The situation in Burundi is stable, calm and under control throughout the country, with the notable exception of a few isolated cases of common criminality such as occur in other countries. From north to south, west to east and in the centre, day and night, Burundian citizens enjoy their civil and political rights in peace. Officials of the United Nations and of subregional organizations who have recently visited the country have seen with their own eyes how peace and security have been restored in Burundi. Major efforts are under way throughout the country to preserve this longed-for peace, first and foremost by promoting Burundians' love of country and attachment to the intrinsic principles and values that our nation was built on.

A plan has been developed for securitizing the 2020 electoral process and training programmes in several areas related to the elections are being implemented, with a view to preparing for their overall security. The restoration of peace, stability and trust in the country is transforming the national landscape. Today all Burundians, in their rich diversity, feel safe, protected and able to freely participate in the political process without fear or restriction. Political and social discourse is conducted with mutual respect and tolerance and acceptance of those different from ourselves.

In terms of collective security, we continue to participate actively in the fight against terrorism and in peace operations, with approximately 6,000 troops in contingents on the ground, primarily in Somalia and the Central African Republic. Our participation in peacekeeping around the world is our way of repaying the international community, which has always supported us during difficult periods in our history. The full value of our substantial contribution to peace operations and the fight against terrorism should be recognized and appreciated in that regard.

In terms of development, the greatest challenge facing Burundi today is the fight against poverty, the common enemy of all Burundians of all political and social stripes. It was in that context that the Government of Burundi developed and finalized our new 10-year national development plan, and we are seeking the support of our traditional and non-traditional partners in helping us to implement the plan. The United Nations, through its country team and the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, can serve as a bridge between Burundi and its partners in mobilizing the resources needed to complement our national efforts to implement Burundi's new development strategy.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, we welcome the mass voluntary returns of Burundian refugees who fled the country in 2015. Beyond the several thousand Burundians who are returning without assistance from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, between 1 August 2017 and 29 October — that is, yesterday — 79,375 refugees, belonging to 26,739 households, were voluntarily repatriated to Burundi from Tanzania, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The most recent group, composed of 252 refugees from 134 households, arrived yesterday in Kobero in Muyinga province, on our northern border with Tanzania. Such mass voluntary returns are clear evidence that peace, harmony, trust and stability have been restored to the country, despite the comments of some foreign actors who continue deliberately to inflate the number of refugees still in exile in order to keep Burundi in artificial crisis mode and to maintain jobs.

Turning to the human rights situation, the Government of Burundi is continuing its efforts to improve the situation and the promotion of human rights through a number of national mechanisms that have been established, in particular the Independent National Human Rights Commission. We cooperate closely with international mechanisms accepted by all, such as the Universal Periodic Review, which reviews the human rights situation in each Member State without singling out States. Most recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review are being implemented by the Government of Burundi. As an example, the Government regularly carries out impartial, independent and effective investigations into proven cases of alleged human rights violations reported to it so that all perpetrators without exception are rapidly



brought to justice and punished in accordance with the law.

Regarding the rebuilding of trust between Burundi and our bilateral partners, the Government of Burundi is striving to resume peaceful relations with our development partners, in particular those that have wavered since 2015. We hope to encourage our traditional and non-traditional partners to focus on the future of Burundi and to move forward together, putting aside the short-lived misunderstanding in 2015. It is now time to rebuild trust among us, to review things that did not work and to put them right in a spirit of mutual trust. We must acknowledge the political realities and prevent any relapse. Continued confrontations are counterproductive in all areas and for all parties. For its part, the Government of Burundi reaffirms its readiness to improve bilateral relations with its development partners. Against that backdrop, the country's highest authorities have recently again dispatched ambassadors to those countries where bilateral relations were disrupted following 2015.

With regard to our relationship with the United Nations — and this is an extremely important point — we welcome the role played by the United Nations country team in Burundi in assisting national efforts to implement the national development plan, the Sustainable Development Goals and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for 2019 to 2023. The Government of Burundi commits to working constructively with the United Nations country team

in Burundi so as to achieve lasting socioeconomic development in the interests of all Burundians. However, we remain convinced that having the situation in Burundi on the Security Council agenda is inappropriate and violates the Charter of the United Nations. The current political and security situation in the country does not represent a threat to international peace and security, which would justify Burundi remaining on the Security Council agenda. We reiterate our legitimate call for Burundi to be removed from the Council agenda. The arbitrary retention of Burundi on the Council's agenda is likely to set a bad precedent. The holding of unnecessary meetings on Burundi, which are not justified by the reality on the ground, will destabilize the country rather than promote peace and calm. Some troublemakers take advantage of that to commit crimes in the days leading up to each Security Council meeting.

In conclusion, Burundi reiterates its commitment to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and its determination to strengthen democracy, consolidate peace and security and achieve balanced, inclusive and lasting socioeconomic development in the interests of the Burundian people.

**The President:** There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

*The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.*