

**RESPONSE BY HON. PEYA MUSHELENGA, MP, DEPUTY MINISTER  
OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION ON THE  
QUESTION ON THE SITUATION IN BURUNDI ASKED BY HON. NICO  
SMIT, 9 JULY 2015**

**Honorable Speaker**

**Honorable Members of Parliament,**

I rise to respond to the question by Hon Nico Smit on the situation in Burundi.

- i) On 25 April 2015, the ruling party - National Council for the Defense of Democracy – Force for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) announced the nomination of the incumbent President H.E. Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza as its presidential candidate for the poll envisaged to take place on 15 July 2015 and the Parliamentary elections that took place on 29 June 2015.
- ii) Following this announcement, violent street demonstrations ensued amidst heightening political tensions in Bujumbura, the capital city of Burundi, resulting in the subsequent closure of independent radio stations, physical and economic infrastructural damages, unfortunate deaths, with scores injured. The resultant situation of insecurity triggered the fleeing of more than 110000 Burundians to the neighboring countries of Tanzania, Rwanda and the DRC.
- iii) The issue of President Nkurunziza's right to stand for a third term as President of Burundi was premised on an interpretation of the country's

Constitution; a Constitutional Court judgement affirming conformity of the exercise in line with the Constitution's provisions. Notwithstanding this, the impartiality of the Court came under scrutiny by the opposition subsequent to the fleeing to Rwanda of the Vice-Chairperson of this institution, who alleged having received death threats because of his refusal to sign the judgement in question.

- iv) Calls were made to encourage dialogue and consensus aimed at finding an amicable solution to the crisis relative to the preservation of the letter and spirit of the August 2000 Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Accord, which established the conditions for the organisation of free, fair and credible elections.
- v) These were further reinforced with the dispatching of a High Level Mission of the Panel of the Wise, led by Mr. Edem Kodjo, the former Secretary General of the OAU, to consult with all competent national stakeholders. The Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for the Great Lakes Region, H.E. Mr.Said Djinnit on 5 May 2015 travelled to Burundi, to mediate in the conflict with the objective of brokering a political consensus on all issues related to the electoral process.
- vi) These mediation efforts were later reinforced by representatives of the East African Community (EAC) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) as facilitators premised on the realization of a political dialogue on the impasse.

- vii) A Summit on the situation in Burundi on 31 May 2015 recommended that the elections be postponed for a month and a half in order to allow the security situation to improve
- viii) While President Nkurunziza was at an EAC Summit on 13 May 2015, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, a coup attempt was made by some soldiers led by Mr. Godefroy Niyombare, a top Burundian general sacked from his powerful position as Intelligence Chief.
- ix) Initially the elections were postponed for 10 days. However, donors then suspended their support to the electoral process, and the Government said that it intended to find the means to organise the elections on the scheduled date, especially through the mobilisation of domestic resources.
- x) The Parliamentary poll in Burundi was then been postponed and took place **on 29 June 2015, and the Presidential poll envisaged to take place on 15 July 2015, seeing that the mandate of the current administration ends on 26 August 2015.**
- xi) In response to question (i), I would like to submit that our position is anchored in the values enshrined in the Namibian Constitution, namely the democratic elections of the representatives of the people based on the constitution, the rule of law and justice. It is, therefore, important that elections are held before the expiry of the mandate of the current administration, in order to avoid a vacuum in government.

- xii) Namibia, as a member of the African Union Peace and Security Council, stresses that only dialogue and consensus, in accordance with the Arusha Agreement and the Constitution of Burundi, will make it possible to find a lasting solution to the crisis and appeals to the Burundian actors to lend their full cooperation to the efforts made. To this end, Namibia supports the position of the East African Community, that elections be held in Burundi when the political situation on the ground so permits.
- xiii) Besides this, there are concerns raised by Burundi's neighbors, especially Rwanda who is on record of having expressed serious concerns about the deteriorating political situation in Burundi, worrying that the Rwandan rebels operating in eastern DRC could take advantage of the current unhelpful situation to destabilize Rwanda.
- xiv) With regard to question two, allow me to remind Hon. Smit that Namibia will be a member of the Peace and Security Council until April 2016. The Honorable Member can be rest assured that Namibia is integral to the finalization of all statements by the African Union Peace and Security Council, and that its views are so represented. Namibia does not, therefore, need to make a separate pronouncement on any issue stated by the Council.
- xv) Regarding question three, as Honourable members know, the Namibian Constitution, from preamble to the last word guards the human rights of the Namibian people. It is the express responsibility of the Ministry ~~to~~ ~~the~~ to base all our foreign policy statements and principles upon that Constitution and the Namibian institutions which support it, including the Ombudsman, the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labour, etc.

xvi) Namibia is also a member of the Human Rights Council, which it will be until 2016, where it firmly advocates for human rights in line with the Namibia Constitution. Namibia's membership and its work on the Human Rights Council is testimony to the importance that human rights and violation thereof, plays in our foreign policy.

I thank you.

