

REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI



PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC
Secretariat-General of the State

**MEDIA RELEASE N°08 CONSECUTIVE TO THE CABINET MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 04 MAY 2022**

A Cabinet meeting was held in Gitega on Wednesday 4th of May 2022, under the chairmanship of His Excellency Major General Evariste NDAYISHIMIYE, President of the Republic of Burundi.

Before presenting the agenda, His Excellency the President of the Republic expressed his condolences to the Burundian people and to the families of the Burundian soldiers on a peacekeeping mission in Somalia, victims of a terrorist attack by the Al Shabaab group. He asked to pray for their souls

After the presentation of the agenda, His Excellency the President of the Republic invited the Prime Minister to present the summary of the observations resulting from the preparatory meeting of the Council of Ministers which the Prime Minister chaired on Friday 29 April 2022, and which was devoted to the analysis of the same files on the agenda.

After restitution by the Prime Minister to the President of the Republic, the following issues were analyzed:

1. Bill on the ratification by the Republic of Burundi of the agreement on the mutual abolition of visa procedures for holders of diplomatic or service passports between the Government of the Republic of Burundi and the Government of the Russian Federation, presented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation.

With the aim of intensifying bilateral ties of friendship and cooperation, further strengthening their bilateral relations, developing and expanding their cooperation framework, the Government of the Republic of Burundi and the Government of the Russian Federation have signed in Bujumbura, on February 06, 2018, the agreement on the mutual abolition of Visa Procedures for Holders of Diplomatic or Service Passports.

This agreement is guided by the desire to promote the development of friendly relations between the two countries and to create the most favorable conditions possible for the travel of citizens of the two countries holding valid diplomatic and service passports.

By ratifying this Agreement, Burundi will have contributed to its implementation, particularly in relation to the promotion of free movement and the right of establishment for nationals of the two countries.

After discussion and debate, the project was adopted.

2. Draft Protocol of Member States of the Economic Community of Central African States relating to Elections, presented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation.

Elections in the world in general and in Africa in particular, play an important role in peace processes and democratic transitions. Their aim is to enable citizens to freely choose their political representatives and to allocate power peacefully. However, when a society is already experiencing tensions and the stakes of electoral competition are high, violence and fraud can affect elections.

According to a 2015 study, 20% of elections over the past two decades are considered violent. This violence is not the result of the elections, but rather the reflection of the

dysfunctions of the political processes. When well organized, elections can pave the way for freedom of expression and initiate peaceful alternations or transitions.

On the basis of these observations, the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa has risen to take matters into its own hands, in order to establish peace, security and stability in the sub-region.

Thus, during the 50th Meeting of this Committee, held in Malabo in the Republic of Equatorial Guinea from December 2 to 4, 2020, the Committee made a statement from Malabo on democratic and peaceful elections as a means of strengthening stability and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Central Africa.

Proposed by the Republic of Burundi, the theme of the management of electoral processes in the ECCAS area was developed during the 51st meeting of this Committee, held in Bujumbura from May 24 to 28, 2021.

By proposing this theme, the Republic of Burundi referred to its 2018 and 2020 elections which were marked by a success on a larger scale, characterized by a democratic, transparent aspect and above all with funding totally devoid of foreign subsidies.

During this meeting, one of the recommendations made by member states was to “develop a sub-regional protocol on the management of elections in Central Africa”.

This is how the Republic of Burundi, which chaired the said Committee in this period from May 2021 to November 2021, proposed to initiate a draft protocol and to present it to the other States of the Economic Community of Central Africa States.

This draft protocol, once accepted by the Member States, will help the entire sub-regional community to master certain politico-security problems which haunt the sub-region.

At the end of the discussions, the project was adopted.

3. Bill on the ratification by the Republic of Burundi of the general bilateral cooperation agreement between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Government of the Republic of Burundi, presented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation .

The Republic of Burundi and the Republic of Serbia, based on the bilateral ties of friendship, cooperation and solidarity that exist between the two countries and their peoples, wish to strengthen the existing mutual ties, develop and further extend their cooperation framework.

To this end, a general cooperation agreement was signed between the two countries on February 20, 2019 in Belgrade. It is an instrument that will serve as a basis for the negotiations and the conclusion of other sectoral agreements in various relevant areas.

By ratifying this Agreement, Burundi would have contributed to the consolidation and improvement of mutual cooperation relations based on the principle of respect for national sovereignty. It would also have contributed to economic diplomacy, which is one of the priorities of his Government.

After discussions, the project was adopted.

4. Bill amending Law No. 1/35 of December 31, 2014 on the organic framework of religious denominations, presented by the Minister of the Interior, Community Development and Public Security.

Since the promulgation of Law No. 1/35 of December 31, 2014 on the organic framework of religious denominations, the observation is that certain Churches, instead of being benchmarks of morality which teach good and avoid evil, rather become areas of conflict and confrontation between the faithful. Some go so far as to fight against each other during worship.

The reasons for these quarrels are various, in particular the disagreement relating to the management of the property of the Church or between the governing bodies. Some governing bodies within the churches do not want to handover office at the end of their terms, hinting suggests to the intention of these bodies not being good management but rather management that tends towards embezzlement and pure and simple appropriation of Church property.

The conflict situation in some churches has led the National Police of Burundi to be often called out to ensure order in places of worship to avoid physical confrontations.

In addition to this context of disturbing public order caused by certain Churches, there is the persistence of facts that are contrary to Law No. 1/35 of December 31, 2014 on the organic framework of religious denominations, in particular:

- Churches that operate without approval;
- Trafficking in photocopies of ministerial approval ordinances or falsification of approval ordinances to allow churches that have not yet been approved to organize worship services;
- The establishment of churches without respecting the distance required by law;
- Churches that worship in classrooms, cabarets;
- Churches that do not meet the minimum health and hygiene conditions;
- Churches that do not respect the statutory hours of worship or that make noise, thus disturbing the tranquility of the population;
- Leaders of religious denominations who abuse their followers.

The objective of the Government of Burundi is to establish public order, to enforce the law, good morals, while guaranteeing public freedoms.

Religious denominations, being privileged partners in the organization of society, must, in addition to the spiritual aspect, participate in the development of the country in the same way as other national and international organizations operating in Burundi. It is with a view to finding a lasting solution to the functioning of the Churches that this bill is proposed.

The main innovations made to the law in force concern:

- The abolition of the Body for the Regulation and Conciliation of Religious Confessions, which has proved ineffective;
- The regulation on the days, hours and places of worship while allowing the faithful to go about their daily activities with a view to their own development;
- The obligation for religious denominations seeking approval to have decent places of worship that meet hygienic conditions and are made of durable materials;
- The requirement of a certain level of high education up to the baccalaureate level for the leaders of religious denominations and religious movements, in order to guarantee better leadership likely to properly guide the faithful;

- The requirement for religious denominations operating under the regulatory regime of foreign mother churches to conclude a framework agreement with the Government of Burundi;
- The requirement of traceability of funds from foreign countries intended for the financing of religious denominations;

After discussion and debate, the project was adopted with the following recommendations:

- Delete the provision that speaks of the position of visionary;
- Insert a provision that provides for the establishment of a Doctrinal Council in religious denominations that so wish but which are not part of the governing bodies;
- Insert a provision specifying that governing bodies are elected democratically and are distinguished from spiritual titles;
- Provide for dismemberments of the Arbitration Committee to be able to settle disputes even in the branches if they exist;
- In the approval of religious denominations, provide for provisional approval and give final approval after ensuring that all requirements have been met;
- Dissociate the responsibilities of the Legal Representative and the head of worship;
- Specify that the mandate of the governing bodies is 5 years renewable;
- Instead of prohibiting a follower from belonging to several religious denominations, rather prohibit a follower from belonging to the governing bodies of more than one religious denomination;
- Insert a provision that prohibits a person from considering himself as God and also prohibits preaching atheism;
- Include a provision authorizing the public authorities to organize elections when the governing bodies of religious denominations refuse to organize elections at the end of their mandate;
- Sensitize religious denominations that carry out lucrative activities to declare and pay tax.

5. National handicraft policy and its implementation strategy, presented by the Minister of Trade, Transport, Trade and Industry.

Handicrafts in Burundi constitute an indispensable and unavoidable sector in the implementation of an ambitious development policy, thanks to its capacity and potential to generate jobs with a minimum of capital, to fight against household and population poverty.

Currently, the craft sector continues to develop without strategic orientation documents, because almost all craft activities are carried out in an unstructured framework.

To remedy this, the development of this sector will begin with the establishment of a national strategy for the implementation of the National Crafts Policy and its operational action plan.

The results expected from this strategy are of paramount importance in terms of the creation of stable and decent jobs, craft production with high added value, development of local resources, development of know-how, export of diversified nationalities and the anchoring of craft trades in the reality and in the heritage of the country.

This policy and its implementation strategy will provide a frame of reference for better synergy between stakeholders and a rational organization of activities for the development and promotion of the artisanal sector.

At the end of the debate, the policy and its implementation strategy were adopted with the following recommendations:

- In the Presentation Note, show the whole process of preparing this project;
- Show the inventory of Crafts and the objective to be achieved;
- Show how artisans will be protected and supported, in particular by the construction of a kind of Crafts Museum;
- Translate this policy into Kirundi and find appropriate terms that promote the profession, with the support of the National Legislation Service;
- Specify the period of life of this policy;
- Revitalize craft schools;
- Strengthen the capacities of craftsmen so that they produce quality objects;
- Express the necessary budget in Burundian francs;

6. Draft decree on the missions, composition, organization and functioning of the Office of Geomatics Centralization, presented by the Services of the Prime Minister

The Geomatics Centralization Office was created in 2013 and its main mission is to coordinate all activities aimed at creating a National Spatial Data Infrastructure in Burundi, to

consolidate and organize the exchange and dissemination of geographic information between all national, regional and international partners, producers and users.

This decree has been amended in order to comply with the new constitution of 2018, by placing the Office of Geomatics Centralization under the supervision of the Prime Minister, because before, it was under the supervision of the 2nd Vice-Presidency of the Republic which no longer exists in accordance with the new Constitution.

The revision currently proposed will make it possible to put in this decree, in addition to the Steering Committee, the other complementary bodies in the implementation of the missions of the Geomatics Centralization Office, namely:

- The geomatics technical committee;
- The national Geographic Information System platform.

After discussion and debate, the project was adopted with recommendations to properly reformulate the title, specifying the decree it modifies.

7. Note on the organization of the National Symposium on Education, 2022 edition, presented by the Minister of National Education and Scientific Research

Since 2010, the Government of Burundi has undertaken a major reform of the education system, in particular through the establishment of the Fundamental School at the level of primary education and the BMD (Baccalaureate-Masters, Doctorate) reform at the level of higher education. These reforms were guided by the fact that the Government was aware of the considerable role that education must play for the development of human capital in national planning.

However, the development of this capital is dependent on education and training through a coherent education system adapted to the socio-economic realities of the country, to be able to influence the other pillars of development. Thus the National Development Plan 2018-2027 provides, in its axis 5, the strengthening of the education system and the improvement of the quality of education and the training offer to provide the country with qualified and competent human resources that it will need in the other sectors of national life.

Any educational system must be constantly redesigned to promote an education which enables the individual to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes enabling him to understand his environment, to continue his education and training within society and to participate more actively to its economic, social and cultural development.

However, the Burundian education system is marked by the lack of motivation of the teaching staff and the poor quality of the services of certain teachers. Also, there is a fundamental problem which lies in the fact that the education and training system is segmented, without anchoring upstream and downstream with the economic and social sectors.

The National Symposium on Education envisaged during the current exercise are likely to find possible solutions to the challenges identified above. It therefore reflects the commitment of the Government of Burundi to fundamentally rethink its education system in order to establish a basis for achieving the medium and long term sustainable development of our country.

Its objective is to contribute to solving the identified problems that bog down the Burundian education system while proposing recovery strategies to establish the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the education sector at all levels.

It should be noted that the last National Symposium on Education date from December 2014.

After analysis, the Council of Ministers recognized the need for this National Symposium on Education and recommended the following:

- Properly align the themes that will be addressed during this Symposium;
- Show the desired objective through the organization of this Symposium;
- Involve the unions in the preparation of this Symposium;
- That requests for explanation be addressed to the representatives of the ministries who had been designated to participate in the preparation of this Symposium and who refused or stopped the work along the way because of the lack of per diems.

8. Note on the changes made to the section Chanic Roundabout (Pk 0+000) - Roundabout Melchior Ndadaye International Airport in Bujumbura (Pk 5+300), presented by the Minister of Infrastructure, Equipment and Social housing.

The purpose of the note was to provide clarifications on the various recommendations made by the Council of Ministers of June 23, 2021 on a note relating the various changes made to the RN5 lot1 project, especially on the Chanic Roundabout section (PK0+000) – Roundabout Melchior NDADAYE international airport in Bujumbura (PK5+300) in relation to the contract.

After analyzing the explanations of the Note, the following emerged:

- The development plan for this road has certain shortcomings, but the execution of the project complied with the bidding documents;
- Those who prepared the tender documents must be held accountable and explain themselves because they called into question the interests of the State;
- There was a lack of information to the hierarchy on the conclusions of the various meetings held with the company executing the project;
- The State must seek funding for the development of the gutters and the construction of the Mutimbuzi Bridge which did not appear in the terms of reference to bring it up to the norms and standards of the roadway;
- The company executing the project must put visible beacons between the roadway and the cycle and pedestrian paths on both sides;
- The measure suspending the payment of invoices to the company that developed the road should be lifted;
- The road must be open for traffic because it is this traffic that will allow the detection of certain faults in this road;
- It is necessary to prohibit the exploitation of the fields alongside this road because the blocking of the gutters for the purpose of irrigating these fields will contribute to the deterioration of this road;
- Major projects should first be submitted to the Government for validation.

9. Any Other Business

His Excellency the President of the Republic reminded the members of the Government to always have projects to submit to partners who wish to support the development of the country.

He also asked to accelerate the finalization of the files analyzed in the Council of Ministers and returned, such as the land of the former FFB and that of the former Central Market of Bujumbura.

He also asked to continue the recovery of state lands which are often used for purposes other than those for which they were requested or which have been looted from the State.

His Excellency the President of the Republic has also asked the ministers in charge of finance and infrastructure to support the ongoing construction at Kigobe Palace.

Finally, he wished a speedy recovery to the Vice President of the Republic.

Done at Bujumbura, 05 May 2022

Prosper NTAHORWAMIYE

Secretary-General and Spokesman.-