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**EIGHTY-EIGHT ORDINARY SESSION OF
THE CENTRAL ORGAN OF THE MECHANISM
FOR CONFLICT PREVENTION, MANAGEMENT
AND RESOLUTION AT AMBASSADORIAL LEVEL**

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**REPORT OF THE INTERIM CHAIRPERSON OF
THE COMMISSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION
ON THE SITUATION IN BURUNDI**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its 86th Ordinary Session at Ambassadorial level held in Addis Ababa on 29 October 2002, the Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution examined the situation in Burundi, as well as developments in the peace process in that country. The Central Organ, on that occasion, adopted a communiqué relating, in particular, to the outcome of the 18th Summit of the Regional Initiative on Burundi which took place in Dar-es-Salaam from 6 to 7 October 2002, the negotiations with the armed groups aimed at concluding a cease-fire agreement, as well as the socio-economic and humanitarian situation in Burundi [Central Organ/MEC/AMB/Comm.LXXVI)].

2. This report covers the developments in Burundi since the 86th Ordinary Session of the Central Organ. It dwells in particular on the evolving political and security situation and on the cease-fire negotiations, which culminated in the signing of an agreement on 2 December 2002 between the Transition Government of Burundi and Pierre Nkurunziza's National Council for the Defence of Democracy/Forces for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD/FDD). The report also describes the socio-economic and humanitarian situation, and concludes with recommendations on the role of the African Union in the current phase of the peace process.

II. POLITICAL AND SECURITY DEVELOPMENTS

3. Since my last report on Burundi [Central Organ/MEC/AMB/(LXXXVI)], I have continued to closely monitor developments in that country. The differences, which I had highlighted within the ranks of the two large political groupings, namely the G7 and the G10, persisted during the period under review. For instance, the Front for the Defence of Democracy in Burundi (FRODEBU) on several occasions clashed with the other G7 members, while the Unity Party for National Progress (UPRONA) for its part had to put up with attacks from its G10 "allies". Several parties from all sides of the political spectrum also complained of exclusion from decision-making and inadequate representation within the major institutions of the country.

4. The persistence of these differences triggered a situation of tension, which was compounded by virulent attacks by the parties and movements signatories to the Framework Agreement.* Fiercely opposed to the Arusha Peace Process, the signatories to the Framework Agreement wanted to take advantage of the situation to once again cast doubts on the transitional institutions; this led to the arrest of a number of opposition personalities, including Mr. Charles Mukasi, leader of the UPRONA faction which is a non-signatory to the Arusha Peace Agreement, and Mr. Diomède Rutamucero, leader of the Puissance Autodéfense Amasekanya. This tension culminated in the suspension of the Party for National Recovery (PARENA) for six months and the house arrest, in early November, of its leader, former President Jean Baptiste Bagaza, for "compromising the internal and external security of the State."

5. The socio-political turmoil that accompanied these various measures generated concerns over the future of the peace process. Indeed, the occurrence of the events took place at a time when the cease-fire negotiations, then underway in Dar-es-Salaam between the warring parties, were entering a decisive phase.

6. During the period under review, the activities of the transitional institutions continued. The Government, in concert with the Parliament, intensified its efforts to bring the war to an end. Following the agreement signed on 7 October 2002 with Colonel Jean-Bosco Ndayigengurukiye's CNDD-FDD and Alain Mugabarabona's Party for the Liberation of Hutu People/National Liberation Forces (PALIPEHUTU-FNL), a cease-fire agreement was concluded with the CNDD-FDD of Pierre Nkurunziza on 2 December 2002.

7. On 3 January 2003, the Transition Parliament closed its 3rd Ordinary Session, which had opened on 7 October 2002. At that session, the Parliament received 28 (twenty-eight) draft laws from the Government, out of which were adopted the law on the review of the composition and organization of the political parties; the law on organization and operation of the National Observatory for the Prevention and Eradication of Genocide, War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity; the law on organization and operation of the National Council for Unity and National Reconciliation; and the law on the mandate and organization of the National Rehabilitation Commission for Disaster Victims (CNRS).

8. The Executive Council of the Arusha Agreement Implementation Monitoring Commission (CSA) continued to make preparations for the Eleventh Session of the

* The following are the Organizations and Associations signatories to the Framework Agreement: UPRONA (Mr. Charles Mukasi's faction), Autodéfense AMASEKANYA, Action contre Génocide, J.R.R. (Jeunesse révolutionnaire Rwagsore), U.F.B. (Union des femmes burundaises), Coalition contre la dictature.

CSA, which had been postponed more than once owing to the cease-fire negotiations then in progress in Dar-es-Salaam and Pretoria, alternatively. Slated originally for 4 – 9 November 2002, the Eleventh Session was first deferred to 18 – 23 November 2002, then called off and postponed *sine die* pending the results of the cease-fire talks. Lastly, the period 13 – 18 January 2003 was proposed for the Eleventh Ordinary Session of the CSA, to be followed by an Extraordinary Session, the first of its kind for the Commission, to address the litigations among the signatory parties which had been brought before it. The agenda of the Eleventh Ordinary Session of the CSA, among other things, will include evaluation of the cease-fire negotiations and follow up on the activities of both the Government and the Parliament regarding political, legal and administrative, economic, social and financial issues.

9. On the ground, the period following the 86th Ordinary Session of the Central Organ was initially characterized by the resurgence of fighting between the armed groups (P. Nkurunziza's CNDD-FDD and Agathon Rwasa's PALIPEHUTU-FNL) and Government forces. This resurgence of violence particularly affected the provinces of Bujumbura Rural, Gitega and Mwaro, as well as the southern and south-eastern provinces of the country, namely, Ruyigi, Cankuzo, Makamba, Rutana and Bururi.

10. The capital Bujumbura was not spared of the violence which continued to engulf the country during the period under review: on Friday 22 November 2002, an artillery attack was launched on the Municipality from the hills overlooking the city, causing considerable human and material losses. The residence of my Special Representative, Ambassador Mamadou Bah, was hit by mortar fire, wounding one of the domestic servants, while a vehicle was damaged at the residence of the United Nations Special Representative, Ambassador Berhanu Dinka.

11. Following the signing of the 2 December 2002 cease-fire agreement, some calm was observed though it has been interspersed by sporadic clashes between the army and the forces of Agathon Rwasa's PALIPEHUTU-FNL, which has not yet signed the cease-fire agreement, and Nkurunziza's CNDD-FDD, whose encampment (and consequently supplies) has not yet been effected.

III. CEASEFIRE NEGOTIATIONS

12. The 18th Summit of the Regional Initiative for Peace in Burundi, during which the Transition Government, on one hand, and the CNDD-FDD of Jean Bosco Ndayikengurukiye and the PALIPEHUTU-FNL of Alain Mugabarabona, on the other, signed a cease-fire agreement on 7 October 2002, gave the remaining armed groups, namely the CNDD-FDD (Pierre Nkurunziza's faction) and the PALIPEHUTU-FNL (Agathon Rwasa's wing), a 30-days deadline to conclude a cease-fire agreement with the Transition Government without pre-conditions. It was expected that the negotiations with these two armed groups would commence on 21 October 2002.

13. At its 29 October 2002 session, the Central Organ, after expressing support for the decisions of the 18th Summit of the Regional Initiative, encouraged the parties in Burundi to fully co-operate with the Facilitation in order to conclude a cease-fire agreement within the stipulated period. The Central Organ paid tribute to President El Hadj Omar Bongo and Deputy President Jacob Zuma, as well as the leaders of the countries of the Region, for their sustained and resilient efforts to achieve a cease-fire agreement. The Central Organ also paid tribute to President Benjamin Mkapa and the Government of Tanzania for the efforts they had invested in the promotion of peace and reconciliation in Burundi.

14. The round of negotiations took off, as planned, on 21 October 2002, in the Tanzanian capital, under the auspices of Deputy President Jacob Zuma and the Minister Delegate in the Gabonese Foreign Affairs Ministry, Mr. Jean-François Ndongou, representing President El Hadj Bongo. Also present were my Special Representative, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General and Representatives of the Tanzanian authorities. The round was preceded by a series of consultations with the armed groups that were aimed at creating a conducive atmosphere for dialogue before the effective commencement of talks between the warring parties.

15. At its meeting with the Facilitation, my Special Representative and that of the United Nations Secretary General, the PALIPEHUTU-FNL relayed the following message:

- it was in Dar-es-Salaam to present its position and not to negotiate;
- it would negotiate only after the Transition Government of Burundi has accepted the pre-conditions it had submitted, namely:
 - the recognition of PALIPEHUTU-FNL as a political party;
 - the freeing all political and war prisoners;
 - the dismantling of the regroupement camps, which were characterized as concentration camps;
 - the encampment of the Burundi armed forces in their barracks; and
 - the dismantling and disarming of the militias.

16. In response, the Special Representatives of the African Union and the United Nations as well as the Facilitation emphasised that there was no alternative to negotiations, and urged PALIPEHUTU-FNL to pay attention to the recommendations

of the 18th Summit of the Regional Initiative and enter into negotiation without delay with the Transition Government of Burundi. The consultations did not however lead to any change in the position of the PALIPEHUTU-FNL delegation. As a matter of fact, there was no negotiation between this armed group and the Government.

17. On the other hand, consultations with Pierre Nkurunziza's CNDD-FDD proved to be conclusive. The consultations indeed paved the way to overcome the problems raised by that armed group relating in particular to the document that should serve as basis for discussion (the CNDD-FDD having finally agreed to talks on the basis of the draft agreement submitted by the Facilitation, which was the outcome of the work of military experts from the United Nations, the African Union, Tanzania and South Africa) and to references to the Transition Government and the Arusha process contained in the draft agreement (arguing that it had not been represented in Arusha, the CNDD-FDD had indeed initially refused that reference be made to the Transition Government and the Arusha process).

18. On 29 October, for the first time since the start of the negotiations, a plenary session was organized between the delegation of the Transition Government led by President Pierre Buyoya and the delegation of the CNDD-FDD led by Pierre Nkurunziza. Deputy President Jacob Zuma hailed that historic meeting between the two parties and urged them to make the necessary compromises so as to reach an agreement as early as possible. Speaking at that plenary session, my Special Representative and the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General similarly urged the two parties to show flexibility, and reaffirmed the support of the international community for the peace process in Burundi.

19. Negotiations between the Transition Government and the CNDD-FDD continued from 29 October to 7 November 2002 within two sub-Committees, the first charged to discuss political issues, while the second sub-Committee focused on security matters. It is noteworthy that the two parties made it clear that they had decided that the negotiations should be undertaken exclusively among Burundians who would have recourse to the Facilitation only if need be. Thus, the sub-Committee on security requested, on 4 November, the presence in its meetings of military experts from South Africa, Tanzania, the African Union and the United Nations, while, at the same time, the Facilitation, assisted by AU, UN and Tanzanian representatives, maintained close contact with the parties to help them to overcome the difficulties that arose during the negotiations. The Gabonese Minister Delegate, Mr. Jean-François Ndongou, shuttled between the two sub-Committees.

20. At the expiry, on 7 November, of the 30 days deadline given by the 18th Summit of the Regional Initiative for the conclusion of the negotiations, substantial

differences still existed between the two parties, particularly in regard to CNDD-FDD's demand that the Burundi armed forces should be encamped and disarmed concurrently with its own combatants. Deputy President Jacob Zuma formally closed the negotiations the following day, after taking note of the progress achieved.

21. Following consultations with the President of the Regional Initiative, President Yoweri Museveni, Deputy President Zuma secured another deadline for the continuation of the negotiations, which subsequently resumed in Dar-es-Salaam on 26 November 2002 and ended in Arusha during the 19th Regional Summit on Burundi, held from 1 to 2 December 2002. In attendance at the Regional Summit were Presidents Yoweri Museveni, Benjamin Mkapa, Thabo Mbeki, Chairperson of the African Union, Pierre Buyoya, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and Deputy President Jacob Zuma, as well as representatives of the Governments of Zambia, Gabon, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Also present were my Special Representative and that of the United Nations Secretary General.

22. At that meeting, the Government and the CNDD-FDD, with the support and assistance of the Heads of State and Government in attendance, the Facilitation and the Special Representatives of the African Union and the United Nations, reached a compromise on the issues which had been referred to the Summit for want of agreement. The Transition Government and the CNDD-FDD signed the cease-fire agreement on 2 December 2002.

23. The agreement stipulates that the cease-fire should take effect on 30 December 2002, the date on which the combatants were expected to have concluded their movement to the assembly areas. Cessation of hostilities, also known as a truce, also became effective 72 hours following the signing of the agreement. The cease-fire calls for:

- the suspension of arms and ammunitions supply;
- a ban on the distribution of lethal and/or logistics supplies;
- the freeing of all political prisoners;
- a withdrawal of all foreign troops following the conclusions of the Commission of Inquiry which would resume investigation on the presence of foreign troops both within the armed forces of Burundi and the CNDD-FDD;
- an end to all propaganda among the parties and all incitement to ethnic hatred;
- an end to all attacks by air, land and lake; and
- a cessation of all actions likely to jeopardise the effective implementation of the peace process.

24. The agreement also provides for an African Mission to lead the process for verification and monitoring of the cease-fire; the establishment of joint liaison teams, composed of representatives of all the signatory parties and the African Mission, to operate at national, provincial and local levels; and of a Joint Cease-Fire Commission comprising of representatives appointed by all the warring parties and the African Mission. The cease-fire implementation stages as defined by the agreement include the following:

- **Stage 1:**

- signing a comprehensive cease-fire agreement,
- declaration of cessation of hostilities,
- formation of a joint commission and joint liaison teams,
- deployment of the African mission,
- establishment by the two parties, of a neutral commission to investigate the presence of foreign troops in Burundi, the existence of foreign elements within the ranks of the CNDD-FDD, and the presence of Burundian forces in foreign countries,
- movement of combatants (CNDD-FDD) to the assembly areas with their weapons, under the supervision of the African mission,
- regrouping elements of the Burundian armed forces and other combatants in other areas to be agreed (some elements of the Burundian army will be exempt from the obligation to regroup in specified areas owing to the security situation),
- implementation of disarmament, demobilisation and rehabilitation programmes,
- demining and destruction of excess weapons;

- **Stage 2**

- reform and creation of the structure of the new defence and security forces of Burundi,
- installation of the new defence and security forces.

25. The agreement further spells out the issues on which the parties agreed to pursue negotiations, including the return to constitutional rule, the transition period with the transition leaders, democracy and good governance.

26. In the final communiqué issued at the end of the meeting, the Summit welcomed the signing of the agreement and agreed that the CNDD-FDD should be

transformed into a political party and be integrated into the Transition Government. The Summit made an appeal to the international community to provide all necessary assistance towards the encampment, disarmament, demobilisation and integration of the combatants in the new defence and security forces of Burundi, as well as the rehabilitation of demobilised combatants and soldiers.

27. It should also be mentioned that the Summit paid special tribute to President Benjamin Mkapa for his country's support, as well as to President El Hadj Omar Bongo and Deputy President Jacob Zuma for their efforts. The Summit further paid tribute to the African Union, through my Special Representative, Ambassador Mamadou Bah, and to the United Nations, through the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Ambassador Berhanu Dinka.

IV. EFFORTS TO IMPLEMENT THE CEASEFIRE

28. Since the signing of the cease-fire agreements of 7 October and 2 December 2002 respectively, sustained efforts have been made to create conditions for their rapid implementation. On 4 December 2002, Deputy President Jacob Zuma held a meeting with the United Nations Security Council in New York. In his address to the Council, Mr. Zuma recognised that the uniqueness* of the peace process in Burundi made the direct involvement of the United Nations difficult; he, therefore, called on the latter to demonstrate creativity and innovation to backstop the African Mission mentioned in the 2 December agreement, as well as the other implementation structures, and to provide every other form of assistance, including humanitarian assistance to the combatants. The Security Council, for its part, expressed its readiness to support the immediate and full implementation of the cease-fire agreement, particularly by providing experts to help in the planning and preparation of the concept of operation of the African Mission.

29. On 19 December 2002, the Political Affairs Department of the United Nations organised in New York a meeting of Special Representatives and Envoys, attended also by representatives of several countries and organizations, notably South Africa, Belgium, Canada, United States of America, France, Uganda, Tanzania, the African Union, the European Union, the United Nations Human Rights Commission, the HCR and the UNDP. The meeting, while hailing the signing of the 2 December 2002 agreement, characterising it as a real and encouraging progress in the peace process in Burundi, also underscored the need to immediately set in motion all actions

* Here, reference is being made to the absence of an inclusive cease-fire, since the PALIPEHUTU-FNL of Agathon Rwaswa is not a party to the two agreements, and also to the fact that the combatants belonging to the signatory parties will move to the assembly camps with their weapons. They will be disarmed only at the later date.

needed to implement the agreement within the agreed deadline. It discussed how best to provide humanitarian assistance to the combatants of the armed groups during the truce, in the form of responding to their immediate vital needs, thereby preventing them from committing acts of extortion against the population, as well as creating and maintaining a climate of trust, a *sine qua non* condition for effective implementation of the cease-fire.

30. President Thabo Mbeki, in his capacity as the Chairperson of the African Union, also took a number of initiatives aimed at backstopping the cease-fire implementation process. In this connection, we had a telephone conversation on the issue of deployment of the African Mission and on the countries to be approached to contribute troops.

31. In its communiqué of 29 October, the Central Organ requested me to take all the necessary measures to ensure that the African Union contribute to the cease-fire implementation at the appropriate time. Pursuant to that decision, a brainstorming exercise was carried out at the Commission on the modalities of deploying the African Mission. Similarly, informal contacts were made with the Facilitation's technical team.

32. On 11 December 2002, my Special Representative in Burundi was received in audience by President Buyoya. Discussions centred on the African Mission and the need for its rapid deployment to maintain the momentum generated by the 2 December agreement, and to convince sceptics about the reality of the advances already made. The urgency of deploying the African Mission was reiterated by the Burundi Foreign Affairs Minister, Mr. Therence Sinunguruza, on the occasion of his visit to the Headquarters of the Commission in Addis Ababa on 21 December 2002. The same issue was at the centre of the talks held at the end of December 2002 between my Special Representative in Burundi, Vice President Domitien Ndayizeye and the CNDD-FDD Legal Representative, Pierre Nkurunziza.

33. On 4 January 2003, I corresponded with President Thabo Mbeki Chairperson of the African Union, Yoweri Museveni, Chairman of the Regional Initiative, El Hadj Omar Bongo of Gabon as well as Deputy President Jacob Zuma in their capacity as Mediators. In these correspondences, I underscored the fragility of the situation in Burundi and the urgent need to deploy the African Mission. I suggested in this regard that a meeting be convened in Addis Ababa bringing together both political and technical officials of the Facilitation, the Regional Initiative and the Commission to exchange views on the nature of the African Mission, the modalities of its deployment, its *modus operandi* and its funding, as well as on the contribution expected from the African Union. The recommendations of that meeting would then be transmitted to the Facilitation. As soon as they are accepted, the recommendations would serve as the basis of the deliberations of the Central Organ

on the role of the African Union in the cease-fire implementation. I also wrote to President Buyoya to brief him about this initiative.

34. In Burundi, following the signing of the cease-fire agreement of 2 December 2002, the Transition Government launched a public awareness and information campaign, with President Buyoya, Vice President Domitien Ndayizeye and members of the Government criss-crossing the country to explain to the population the contents of the Agreement. This campaign of explanation helped to clear the concerns arising from the rumours that were misrepresenting the actual content of the Agreement.

35. It goes without saying that the success in the implementation of the Agreements will also depend on the effective management of the critical issues of pre-encampment and encampment of the combatants. In this connection, the United Nations mission, that of the African Union and members of the international community in Bujumbura got together and contacted the Government and the CNDD-FDD. Meetings were also initiated with the donor countries represented in Bujumbura as well as humanitarian agencies, that helped to address CNDD-FDD's request for food assistance to its combatants.

36. With regard to distribution, after initial procrastination and sometimes reticence on the part of the NGOs approached, GTZ, a German Cooperation Agency, expressed willingness to procure and deliver the food commodities to the designated areas. Several contributions are also being expected as part of this assistance: the European Union has already announced a contribution of 500,000.00 Euros, while Great Britain has pledged US\$150,000.00. Lastly, it should be mentioned that, on 30 December 2002, a delegation comprising of President Buyoya's Diplomatic Adviser, my Special Representative, the MIOB Military Adviser, the United States Ambassador in Bujumbura and officers of the Burundi army and of the CNDD-FDD travelled to Musigati, in the Bubanza province, 60 Kilometres to the north of Bujumbura, to look into the logistical aspects of moving supplies to CNDD-FDD combatants.

37. The situation, however, remains very fragile. In this connection, one must mention the incident which took place on Friday 27 December 2002 when CNDD-FDD elements moved out of their assembly areas, thereby exposing themselves to fire from the army. This act by the CNDD-FDD was seen by the army as a violation of the truce accepted by the two warring parties pending the entry into force of the cease-fire.

38. More recently, the Government of Burundi accused the CNDD-FDD of having infiltrated troops into Ruyigi (particularly the Kininya district) and Rutana provinces

and established a military training and instruction centre in those localities. The CNDD, for its part, rejected the accusations, saying that it had done nothing other than embark on an awareness and briefing campaign for its militants and sympathisers. High tension was, therefore, generated between the two parties, giving rise to serious clashes in Ruyigi province on 7 January 2003. Working in collaboration with the United Nations Special Representative and other members of the international community, notably the United States Ambassador in Bujumbura, my Special Representative undertook initiatives aimed at facilitating resolution of the crisis. In this connection, he held several talks with the Burundi Defence Minister and maintained close contact with the CNDD-FDD, including Mr. Nkurunziza.

V. SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

39. As I emphasised in my previous report, the situation of prolonged war in Burundi and the attendant destructions have had a particularly negative impact on the country's economy and the living condition of the people. All the economic and social indicators are bleak. The gravity of the situation is evidenced by the placement of Burundi at the bottom of the human development index (UNDP 2002 Report). Similarly critical is the magnitude of the HIV/AIDS pandemic which is decimating the most deprived sectors of the population, already paying a heavy price as a result of prevalence of malaria and meningitis. It was against this background that the Central Organ, at its 86th Ordinary Session, reaffirmed its concern at the worsening socio-economic and humanitarian situation in Burundi and requested Member States as well as partners of the African Union to step up assistance to Burundi.

40. A Donors' Round Table for Burundi was held in Geneva on 27 – 28 November 2002. The African Union was represented at that meeting, which had a three-fold objective, namely to evaluate the status of implementation of the Arusha Agreement, to examine the socio-economic condition of the country in the light of the reforms undertaken by the Government, and to examine the content of the special emergency programme presented by the Government. On the eve of the Round Table, the Commission addressed communication to all Burundi's bilateral and multilateral donors, to underscore the importance of their support in the overall effort to promote peace in that country. Furthermore, I issued a press release reiterating this appeal.

41. I would like to express my satisfaction at the results of the Round Table at which pledges were made amounting to a total of US\$905.7 million. I hereby urge all the donors concerned to take the necessary steps to translate their pledges into concrete action. On 19 December 2002, President Buyoya sent me a letter thanking the African Union for its contribution and its solidarity with the people of Burundi.

42. With the persistent deterioration of the economic situation and the security climate, massive population movements continued to take place both towards the interior of the country and neighbouring countries. Nearly 400,000 people now reside in displaced persons camps under appalling conditions of misery and extreme promiscuity. According to the statistics published by the UNHCR delegation in Burundi, as of 30 November 2002, the number of Burundian refugees living in camps in Tanzania and repatriated with UNHCR assistance stood at 29,261. A little over 100, 000 people have so far registered for voluntary repatriation. The number of those who have decided to repatriate themselves stands at 20,352. The repatriation of refugees is expected to gain momentum with the entry into force of the cease-fire agreement signed on 2 December 2002.

43. As indicated in my previous reports, the Commission of the African Union has contributed US\$75,000.00 towards the construction of a village to accommodate returnees from Burundi. It gives me pleasure to inform the Central Organ that the Government of Burundi recently allocated an area of four hectares towards the construction of the village which will commence very soon.

VI. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

44. The signing of the cease-fire agreement of 2 December 2002 marks a turning point in the peace process in Burundi, more so as it was reached following the agreement concluded on 7 October between the CNDD-FDD of Jean Bosco Ndayikengurukiye and PALIPEHUTU-FNL of Alain Mugarabona. I wish to commend the Government of Burundi, particularly President Buyoya, for the courage and willingness to compromise, hence crossing a new threshold. My felicitations also go to the CNDD-FDD, and its legal representative Mr. Nkurunziza, for its commitment.

45. The signing of the cease-fire agreement was the result of the tireless efforts of the Facilitation and its Technical Team. I would like, in this connection, to reiterate my sincere thanks and commendations to President Bongo and Deputy President Jacob Zuma whose patience and determination helped overcome the difficulties hitherto considered insurmountable. This advance in the peace process was also a result of the involvement of the Heads of State of the Regional Initiative and President Mbeki, who personally committed themselves to the search for an agreement.

46. Despite the positive achievements, the situation on the ground remains extremely fragile, as evidenced by the clashes some days ago between the Burundi armed forces and elements of the CNDD-FDD and the mutual accusations of cease-

fire violations. In the circumstances, any delay in the deployment of the African Mission is likely to undermine the progress achieved after so many years of painstaking effort.

47. It is my intention, in the days ahead, to intensify my consultations with the Facilitation on the best ways and means to speed up the cease-fire implementation process. Besides, I recommend that the Central Organ:

- i) reaffirm its support for the on-going process particularly the deployment of the African Mission;
- ii) authorise the Commission, in agreement with the Facilitation and the Regional Initiative, to provide all the necessary assistance to facilitate observance of the cease-fire and ensure the rapid deployment of the African Mission;
- iii) commend the Burundian parties concerned for signing the cease-fire agreement and encourage them to scrupulously respect their commitments;
- iv) urge Agathon Rwasa's faction of PALIPEHUTU-FNL to join in the on-going process and to conclude a cease-fire agreement with the Transition Government without delay;
- v) welcome the expressed readiness of the United Nations Security Council to backstop the African mission and the cease-fire implementation process; and
- vi) urge Member States to lend their full support to the on-going efforts, including the deployment of the African Mission.