



ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

Statement by the Co-Presidents of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly on the situation in Burundi

Extremely concerned by the situation in Burundi, the Co-Presidents of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, Louis Michel and Fitz A. Jackson, call for urgent, strong and concerted action by the African Union, the European Union and the East African Community to prevent the outbreak of a new civil war. The Co-Presidents also call on the Burundian authorities to restore confidence among all Burundians, beginning with a return to full compliance with the Arusha Accords of 2000.

The Co-Presidents believe that no one should continue to close their eyes to the unrest, chaos and massacres which have followed the announcement of President Pierre Nkurunziza's decision to stand for a new term. They stress that the clashes between police and opposition supporters have caused too many deaths already, the violence and pressure to which non-state media are subjected has forced journalists underground, opposition leaders are in exile and the murder of Zedi Feruzi remains unsolved.

The Co-Presidents note that President Pierre Nkurunziza's response to protests against his renewed candidature has brought about an increasingly authoritarian and autocratic political climate. The government has declared the demonstrations to be tantamount to an uprising against the legal order. The Co-Presidents warn that this situation is beginning to reawaken ethnic sensitivities.

The Co-Presidents recall that 21 years ago, in Rwanda, we witnessed the tragic, inhuman consequences of arms being distributed among the general population. We must not make the same mistake twice: it is imperative to immediately disarm youth groups affiliated with political parties.

The Co-Presidents call on the European Union, the African Union and the East African Community to act immediately by taking strong measures to contain the spread of violence, and to make absolutely clear that any government which emerged from elections organised in a manner that was contrary to the Arusha Accords would not be recognised by the international community.

The Co-Presidents call on the Burundian authorities to respect and protect the fundamental rights of all Burundians, including the freedom of speech and the freedom of assembly of opposition supporters, open up the media without delay, allow opposition leaders in exile to return to the country, free all political prisoners unconditionally and end the harassment of civil society organisations.

The Co-Presidents stress the need to prevent a human tragedy which risks spreading across the entire Great Lakes region.

Suva, Fiji, 17 June 2015