**Federica Mogherini,** *Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy***.** – Mr President, as all the speakers have pointed out, this is a very difficult month for the people of Burundi, with more violence inflicted on a population that has already suffered too much.

In April, the Council assessed that there was no reason to change its decision on appropriate measures, as per Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement. This means that, although we continue to support the people of Burundi through partners on the ground – and I want to reassure you on that point – we have suspended direct financial support to the administration of Burundi. The country remains the only one to have effectively withdrawn from the International Criminal Court, as some of the speakers pointed out, and this decision has come together with a deterioration of the situation in the country.

On 17 May, a constitutional referendum was held in a climate of intimidation and repression. Political freedoms are being disregarded. Arbitrary arrests and extra-judicial executions have become common, a situation that we had already denounced before the vote, and we have also called on the authorities of the country to respect the spirit and the letter of the Arusha peace agreement.

Last week, on 27 June, the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi briefed the UN Human Rights Council in advance of the submission of its final report in September and, according to the Commission, the ruling party’s youth wing bore the main responsibility for human rights violations during the referendum campaign, with the complicity or approval of state officials. After the referendum, the President indicated that he would not run for the post again in 2020, after 15 years in office. But the announcement, as some of you mentioned very clearly, will need to be followed by an opening of political and public space.

The next important political step would be an inclusive dialogue focused on delivering credible elections in 2020. I agree with those of you who underlined the key role of regional players in mediating and facilitating this process, and we give them all our support. Back in 2000, the Arusha agreement gave hope not only to Burundi but also to the entire region, and it is urgent now to go back to the spirit of that agreement and to preserve the country as an inclusive and democratic home for all its people. It is what we will continue to work for, together with the United Nations, the African Union and the East African Community.

Let me answer specifically two questions that were raised. Nina Gill asked about our humanitarian aid, focusing mainly on the refugee response. It has amounted to about EUR 8 million in the course of this year, with relatively limited humanitarian support within Burundi and the major effort outside the country, for refugees.