

Speech: Addressing Peacebuilding Efforts in Burundi

I thank the representative of Bolivia for his statement and I shall now make a statement in my capacity as a representative of the United Kingdom.

I'd like to thank our Special Envoy Kafando for his briefing and I also agree with my Russian colleague on the value of the Peacebuilding Commission and on Ambassador Lauber's work. He's unfortunately on vacation, but it is really important that we bring all elements of the UN's abilities and capabilities to bear in these situations.

The Arusha Accords brought peace to Burundi after over a decade of civil war and hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths. It is crucial for the long-term stability of Burundi that the spirit and the letter of the Accords are preserved. We welcome President Nkurunziza's announcement that he will step down at the end of this term. It was an important step and an important message for the people of Burundi, the region and the international community. A genuine, inclusive dialogue with all parties remains the only viable option to resolve the political situation. And so as President Kafando has made clear, progress on the EAC-led Inter-Burundian dialogue remains crucial for the future peace and security of both Burundi and the region.

We echo your call for the parties to engage openly and constructively and call upon the region and sub-region to remain fully engaged to ensure swift progress is made over the coming months and weeks.

The human rights situation in Burundi is deeply concerning. The United Kingdom urges the government of Burundi to take steps to make swift progress to improve the situation so the country is better prepared to move towards elections in 2020. Firstly, the government should signal its commitment to upholding human rights by completing its negotiations on an MOU with the OHCHR to allow that organisation to operate effectively in the country. And secondly, the government should implement Human Rights Council Resolution 36.2, endorsed by the African Group of States – including Burundi – and adopted at the 36th session of the Human Rights Council in September 2017. And we urge the government to engage with OHCHR to facilitate the return of the three human rights experts whose visas were revoked in April.