

UN Envoy urges Burundi leaders to 'seize opportunities for national unity and peace'

The Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Burundi, Michel Kafando, has called on the country's leaders to "seize the opportunity" offered by the recent adoption of a new constitution, to create a new political environment that is "conducive to the consolidation of national unity and peace".

Addressing the UN Security Council on Thursday, he commended in particular the adoption on 3 August of a roadmap for the 2020 elections that brought the various political leaders to a consensus. The Special Envoy commended President Pierre Nkurunziza for his recent commitment to leave office in 2020 and for pledging his "full support" for whoever emerges from the voting process, as the new president.

The current crisis in Burundi began in April 2015, when President Nkurunziza began his campaign for a disputed third-term in office, triggering protests and a failed coup attempt.

In his briefing, Mr. Kafando noted the improvement of the security situation since the 17 May national referendum on the new constitution which saw nearly three-quarters of voters registering their approval, or 73 per cent.

"Since the constitutional referendum, apart from some objections by the opposition, the situation has remained calm," he said, all the while encouraging the government to "remain vigilant".

Regarding the humanitarian situation caused by the onset of the crisis three years ago, the Special Envoy commended the efforts made by Burundi, Tanzania and the UN refugee agency ([UNHCR](#)), to enable the voluntary return of some 35,000 Burundian refugees since September last year.

"These efforts must be sustained, respecting the principles of voluntary returns and guaranteeing the dignified reintegration of the returning refugees in their host communities," he stated.

He concluded his briefing calling on the authorities to finalise their agreement with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)) so that that his own office in Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi, could "operate in the best conditions".