

REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI



PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC Secretariat-General of the Government

STATEMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE OCCASION OF THE COMMEMORATION OF THE 25th ANNIVERSARY OF THE ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT MELCHIOR NDADAYE

1. On the occasion of the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the assassination of His Excellency President Melchior NDADAYE, the first democratically elected President, the Government of the Republic of Burundi first of all thanks the Almighty God for this Worthy son he created and gave to Burundi, with both physical and moral qualities and a keen sense of patriotism until the supreme sacrifice, so that Burundi finally regained its long-sought democracy since independence, but alas, bullied, tied up, torpedoed and taken hostage by the enemies of democracy.
2. The Government of Burundi takes this opportunity to pay a very well deserved tribute to this devotee of democracy for the unforgettable, incommensurable and crucial role played with his fellow comrades, so that there is a return of democracy in Burundi, via the return of a multiparty system, born with the era of independence under the monarchy, but quickly suspended since 1966 with the advent of the Republic.

As many know, His Excellency President Melchior NDADAYE played a pioneering role in the process of democratization of Burundi around the 1990s, following the Conference of La Beaulieu, at a time when some of his

fellow Burundians were saying that the return of a multiparty system in Burundi was a threat to democracy.

3. It shall be recalled that after the tragic events of August 1988 in Ntega-Marangara in the north of the country, the open letter of early warning and rapid response of some Burundian intellectuals, addressed to the highest authorities of the Republic at the time, on the grounds of serious political and ethnic drifts, like the dark events in the country such as those of 1965, 1969, 1971 and 1972, a national commission tasked with addressing the issue of the National Unity has been set up.

History will remember that one of the great findings of the work of that commission was the vote of the Charter of National Unity by popular referendum. This charter is a founding text of the bedrock of the principle and the imperative need for renewed national reconciliation; the now sacrosanct principle of the current Constitution of the Republic, inter alia in its article 1: "Burundi is an independent Republic, sovereign, secular, democratic, unitary and respecting its ethnic and religious diversity".

4. As a continuation of the activities of the Commission tasked with addressing the issue of National Unity, another Constitutional Commission, of which the late President Melchior NDADAYE was a member, was set up. He will resign from that commission since he disagreed with some of his colleagues who refused to foresee the return of a multiparty system in the draft constitution. Even though he was no longer a member of that commission, his idea slowly ripened and finally blossomed.

The work of this constitutional commission will be crowned by the Constitution of 1992, voted by referendum. This Constitution consecrated in a decisive and irreversible way, a multiparty system in Burundi, bringing to a halt a period of thirty years of unique political thought.

5. The first pluralistic, and hence democratic, elections resulting from this Constitution, namely the presidential and the deputies elections, were organized in June 1993, elections by direct universal suffrage, with the principle of "one man, one vote".

President Melchior NDADAYE and his party Sahwanya FRODEBU, winning overwhelmingly.

The Government of the Republic of Burundi takes this opportunity to thank President Melchior NDADAYE, the people of Burundi and the Sahwanya FRODEBU Party for leading the country towards the return of democracy even if this victory did not last long.

6. The enemies of democracy did not welcome this victory and savagely assassinated President Melchior NDADAYE and some of his close aides, such as the Speaker and Vice-Speaker of the National Assembly, some members of the Government, some senior state officials, some provincial governors; etc.

The putsch was nothing other than a pure and a stark refusal of democracy, plunging the country into a civil war, which lasted more than ten years. Burundi needed the signing of the Arusha Peace Agreement of August 2000, the various cease-fire agreements, and especially the different technical agreements of the forces, between the Government and

the various parties and armed political movements and the organization of the 2005 general elections, to resume the process of democratization in Burundi.

Since 2005, the democratic institutions agreed upon were under experimentation to stabilize the country. The Constitution voted on May 17, 2018 by referendum, promulgated on June 7, 2018 by the President of the Republic, marks the crowning glory. Once again, it enshrines the principle that “national sovereignty belongs to the people who exercise it, either directly by referendum or indirectly through its representatives. No part of the people, no individual can spoil it”.

7. The Government of the Republic of Burundi wishes to thank the families of the martyrs of democracy for their restraint despite the suffering, especially the Father of the President NDADAYE, not to mention all the families who lost relatives following the putsch and the war resulting from this attempt to overthrow democratically elected institutions.
8. The Government of the Republic of Burundi reiterates once again its firm determination to shed light on the assassination of the Hero of Democracy and his close aides. It encourages the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and Justice to make every effort to ensure that the truth is known about the death of this hero of democracy and the various collateral victims. The culprits must be identified and taken to courts.
9. The Government of the Republic of Burundi urges all Burundians to remain united, to maintain social cohesion, to carry out their daily development routines and not to listen to those who want to take them

back. Proponents and acolytes, both national and international, of the logic of de facto powers, to gain power through the coup and questioning the will of the people, are still rampant and have not completely disarmed. The experience of 2015 is still fresh in the minds of the people of Burundi. It is by complying with the will of the people that the people of Burundi will have honored the memory of the Hero of democracy who gave everything up to his life for Burundi to conquer democracy. It is a long-term hard work that requires courage, tenacity and determination.

Done at Bujumbura, October 21, 2018

**Prosper NTAHORWAMIYE
Secretary-General and Spokesman
of the Government.-**