

Resolution on the rising tension in Burundi

2008/2583(RSP) - 22/05/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

Following the debate which took place during the sitting of 22 May 2008, the European Parliament adopted, by 75 votes to 0, a resolution on the rising tension in Burundi. The resolution had been tabled for consideration in plenary by the EPP-ED, PES, ALDE, UEN, Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL groups. Parliament expresses serious concern at the recent military confrontations in Burundi between the National Defence Forces and the FNL, which have resulted in the loss of innocent lives. It calls on all parties to respect the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement signed on 7 September 2006, and to resume negotiations and move swiftly to implement the JVMM established following the ceasefire. It urges in particular the FNL, and its leader Agathon Rwasa, to engage constructively in the peace process.

Parliament recalls that, in early May 2008, the foreign ministers of Tanzania and Uganda, meeting under the auspices of the Regional Peace Initiative on Burundi, urged the FNL and other senior rebel leaders to leave Tanzania where they are based and to travel to Burundi to enter into peace talks. It calls on the states neighbouring Burundi to ensure they do not serve as bases for the rebel movement, and welcomes Tanzania's decision to cease acting as a haven for FNL leaders. The latest bout of fighting is part of a series of clashes which have left even more households (35 000 people) displaced, bringing the total number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to over 100 000. Parliament notes that Tanzania wants to return its Burundian refugees to Burundi, while Burundi is still taking in thousands of Rwandan and Congolese refugees.

Parliament calls on the Commission to do the following:

- draw up measures to facilitate the reintegration of former FNL fighters into society once an agreement is signed;

- step up its humanitarian assistance, including for refugees and IDPs, and to scale down such assistance only when it is replaced by tangible development actions, in order to ensure a smooth transition between humanitarian operations and development policies;

- propose a swift and significant increase in the financial resources which the European Union grants to Burundi, notably on the occasion of the mid-term review of the tenth European Development Fund;

- promote actions by NGOs and local authorities in the European Union aimed at assisting local authorities and civil society in Burundi;

Recalling that the European Union has chosen Burundi as a pilot country for the implementation of a priority Action Plan aimed at increasing the speed and efficiency of assistance to developing countries that are in a precarious state, Parliament asks the Commission to give priority support within the framework of the much-needed Action Plan to:

- programmes for better governance and democratic state management;

- health policies, through the creation of health centres and the essential renewal of the hospital network;

- the decision by the Burundian Government to provide free primary education;

- the continuing efforts to renew the infrastructure in Burundi.

In view of the urgency of the situation, Parliament insists that the emphasis should be placed on tangible actions visible to the people of Burundi. It calls on the Commission and Member States to reinforce their presence on the ground in Burundi. Donors are asked to honour their undertakings and ensure closer upstream coordination, in order to increase aid effectiveness.

Members reaffirm their support for the South African facilitation and for the regional initiatives, and remain resolved, as part of the political directorate, to play an active part in removing obstacles to implementation of the Action Plan and to assist in all efforts to reactivate negotiations and consolidate peace in Burundi. They also support the mediation efforts of the UN Commission for the Consolidation of Peace.

Parliament notes the greater stability that has come to Burundi since the entry into force of a new constitution followed by general elections, but calls for the establishment of a peace and reconciliation commission as a confidence-building measure that will help restore a climate of confidence and stability among the various interested parties. It calls on the governments of the Member States to support such an initiative financially and logistically.

The Burundian Government is asked to take immediate action to ensure respect for the rule of law, end the climate of impunity, ensure that perpetrators of abuses are brought to justice and improve the training of the police force.

Lastly, Parliament welcomes the recent release of 232 children, following eight months of negotiations with a dissident faction of the FNL by, inter alia, the Burundian Government, civil society and UN agencies.