

Burundi continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security

Thank you, Madam President.

I would like to begin by thanking Special Envoy Kafando for his two and a half years' service in Burundi. Like others, the UK would like to pay tribute to the Special Envoy and his office. The office of the Special Envoy plays an integral role in helping to develop confidence-building measures and supporting efforts to create conditions conducive to political dialogue.

I would also like to thank Ambassador Lauber for his detailed briefing.

I would like to welcome the latest report of the Secretary-General, which provides a valuable record of the current situation in Burundi. The United Kingdom would like to underline once again, as we, and others in this Council have before, the importance of regular written reports on the situation in Burundi that can inform our discussions. As we look ahead to elections in May next year in Burundi, the UK calls upon all interested parties in Burundi and in the wider region, to help ensure that those elections are safe, credible and fully reflect the aspirations of the people. Citizens must have faith in their political process in order to accept the results of the election. Well organised and credible elections are therefore vital for that stability of Burundi.

We encourage the EAC to redouble their efforts to push for an effective, inclusive dialogue. A harmonised roadmap that all parties can support, and which preserves the gains of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement is crucial. We call on the Government and its constituent parties to continue to engage in dialogue with the region and in doing so to send a clear signal of its continued commitment to resolve the ongoing political crisis. We also urge the Government to finalise the Status-of-Mission Agreement with the Office of the Special Envoy.

We note the overall improvement in the security situation but continuing incidents of violence and violations of human rights, some of which target political opponents, are deeply concerning. The latest report by the UN Commission of Enquiry on Burundi records continuing serious human rights violations committed in a general climate of impunity and an intensifying suppression of civil liberties. This must stop. We are also concerned about the operating climate for the media, particularly regarding the BBC and Voice of America. A free press is essential to Burundi's stability, during the electoral process and beyond.

Turning to the refugee situation, we believe that Burundian refugees should be able to return home but this must be done on a voluntary basis where their ability to live in safety and dignity on their return is assured. UNHCR and

other actors in Burundi must be allowed to monitor the situation of returnees in Burundi, including their access to necessary services and their continued protection.

Madam President, with elections next year taking place amidst this fragile political and humanitarian environment and its implications for the broader security of the Great Lakes region, the UK believes that the situation in Burundi continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security. The United Kingdom firmly believes that this must remain on this Council's agenda.