Mr. President,

The gravity of the human rights situation in Burundi and the danger of its further and rapid deterioration is beyond doubt. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has spoken about it this morning as have many others. Amnesty International has addressed the gravity of the situation in its written statement to this Special Session.\(^1\)

While it is clear that the government faces an extremely challenging security situation, characterised by armed attacks on the security forces, the government must confront these challenges in a manner consistent with human rights and the rule of law. The crackdown on independent media and human rights organisations has greatly contributed to the climate of fear in Burundi. Human rights defenders and civil society in Burundi must be allowed to act freely. The suspension of the activities of Burundian civil society, including the Association for the Protection of Human Rights and Detained Persons (APRODH) and other leading human rights organisations, must be ended.

The political and human rights aspects of the current crisis in Burundi are closely intertwined. Efforts to resolve the political crisis have been allowed to stall. Those efforts, in particular the East African Community (EAC) mediation process endorsed by the African Union, must be reinvigorated with a much greater sense of urgency and commitment. The international community must support African and United Nations institutions, including the UN Human Rights Council, in doing everything possible to prevent the human rights situation from deteriorating any further. It is imperative that respect and protection of human rights be at the core of all solutions to the current political crisis. The mediation aimed at resolving the conflict must be reinvigorated and must include addressing past abuses, providing victims with redress and the protection of human rights in the future.

There is no room left for delay. It is essential that key regional and international actors coordinate their efforts efficiently and effectively to bring an end to the current human rights crisis before the violence escalates further.

Thank you Mr. President.

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