

# Burundi

## Peace-Initiatives Help Stem the Violence

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The small central African country of Burundi has been tormented since 1993 by civil strife in which an estimated 250,000 people have been killed. The conflict triggered a series of official diplomatic efforts to bring peace to the country, as well as a number of non-governmental peace-making and reconciliatory initiatives. In August 2000, the government and several other parties in the conflict signed a peace agreement in Arusha, Tanzania, an event that resulted from mediation by Nelson Mandela, who succeeded Nyerere as mediator in December 1999 after the latter's death earlier that year. The peace accord has not brought an end to violence yet. Its implementation is being hindered by eruptions of violence and continued disagreement among the parties involved.

The principal problem in Burundi is the 'ethnic' conflict between the majority Hutus and the minority Tutsis, who have historically held power and still control the military. Tutsis also dominate educated society, and their position is sometimes vehemently defended by militant elements among them. During massive clashes in the 1970s, for instance, militant Tutsis targeted educated Hutus. The ethnic clashes are fuelled by a continuing power struggle between Hutu and Tutsi political elites who are trying to secure access to scarce economic resources through control of state power. Strife among factions within the two ethnic groups is also vehement. Major massacres took place in 1965, 1972 (100,000-200,000 people killed), 1988 and 1993.

The violent ethnic confrontation of 1993 can be seen as the starting point of the current phase in Burundi's civil war. In response to the installation of a Hutu majority government, brought to power by the first democratic elections earlier that year, elements in the Tutsi-led army staged an attempted coup in October 1993. Their attempt failed, but they killed the democratically elected Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye and many other senior Hutu members of government. The events triggered ethnic massacres of Tutsis by Hutus in revenge while the Tutsi army killed many Hutus in retaliation. At least 100,000 people were killed, among them many children and elderly, often slaughtered in an extremely brutal fashion.

The Belgian Africa expert Filip Reyntjens has dubbed the coup attempt 'the most successful failed military take-over' of African history. Although the

military did not take power, their attacks weakened the government, leading to significant concessions to militant Tutsi demands. After October 1993 minor ethnic clashes continued to occur, killing dozens of people every week. The government of Hutu president Sylvestre Ntibantunganya stood powerless in the face of attacks and killings by the young radical Tutsi militia, the Tutsi-led army and Hutu militias and rebels.

The spiralling violence and the diminishing influence of the government, which was run by moderate Hutus and Tutsis, triggered a bloodless coup d'état in July 1996, bringing Major Paul Buyoya to power. For Buyoya this was a return to the highest office. He had been responsible, as then-president, for the introduction of democracy and a multiparty system in Burundi in the early 1990s. After his return to office in 1996, he dissolved the National Assembly and banned political parties. Neighbouring countries decided to isolate Burundi from the outside world by imposing economic sanctions.

Since Buyoya's take-over, the intensity of the conflict has decreased. While the conflict between the Burundian army and rebel movements continued, with concomitant casualties, the selected killings of Hutus and the general level of fear amongst Hutus decreased. Although violence considerably diminished in 1998 and 1999, massacres still occur. Buyoya tried to defuse the tension by the mass recruitment into the army of young unemployed Tutsis. These recruits were formerly the rank and file of uncontrollable militias, the so-called 'Sans Échecs' and 'Sans Défaites'. Buyoya also decided to concentrate Hutu farmers in camps dispersed over the country, supposedly to protect them against militia and rebel attacks.

The armed Hutu opposition consists of three political movements: The National Council for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD); the Parti pour la Libération du Peuple Hutu (Palipehutu); and Umbumwe. Each movement has its own armed branch. For the CNDD this is the Force pour la Défense de la Démocratie (FDD), established in 1994. This organisation also has some Tutsis in its ranks. Palipehutu/FLN, established in 1980, mainly operates from former Zaire and Tanzania, while Umbumwe's Front de Liberation Nationale (FROLINA), which appeared in the late 1980s, operates mainly in the south and the west of the country.

In 1998, the CNDD and its military wing split, when military commander colonel Jean-Bosco Ndayikengurukiye tried to oust Leonard Nyangoma as the CNDD's political leader. However, Nyangoma still claims the presidency and is still recognised as the CNDD's formal representative by foreign diplomats, including the coordinator of the Arusha peace talks, Julius Nyerere. Ndayikengurukiye controls a considerable part of the FDD ranks.

On the other side of the spectrum are the militias of young Tutsis, recruited among educated but unemployed urban youths. These militias are reportedly

funded by the PARENA party of Jean-Baptiste Bagaza, a former dictator, militant Tutsi, and rival of his cousin Buyoya.

The national army of Burundi is still dominated by the Tutsi minority, despite plans developed under ousted president Ntibantunganya to recruit more Hutus. Buyoya's decision to absorb militant Tutsi youngsters into the armed forces strengthened its Tutsi dominance. The Burundian army had a reputation of lacking professionalism until the mid-1990s. Since then, its discipline and combat capacities are said to have improved, largely as a result of an increase in armed attacks by its Hutu opponents and under pressure of international criticism of its human rights records. However, random killings and other human rights violations are still reported to be occurring on a regular basis. Since 1998, the rebels have reportedly coordinated their actions with Hutu forces in Rwanda and the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Burundi Hutu-rebels fought alongside the army of Laurent Kabila after he came to power in the DRC. The Angolan rebel movement, UNITA, allegedly supported the Burundi rebels of the CNDD by providing them with weapons and training. The Burundi national army became involved in the armed struggle in the DRC and stationed troops in the eastern DRC to prevent Hutu rebel infiltration.

The following factors are among those mentioned in literature as causes of the Burundian conflict.

Past discrimination: since independence in 1962, Tutsi-dominated regimes have discriminated against Hutus.

Weight of violent history: Burundi's post independence history is strewn with recurrent coups or attempted coups and inter-communal violence. Clashes took place in 1965, 1966, 1972, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1991, 1993 and 1996. This sequence of massacres has created a culture of violence which is hard to dissolve.

State monopoly of resources: the population is preponderantly rural and engaged in subsistence agriculture. The country's small industrial sector is confined largely to local production or uncompetitive exports such as coffee and tea, produced until recently by state industries. Control of state power almost entirely coincides with control of economic resources. Divisive leaders: the leaders of the countries political camps have engaged in demagogic rhetoric, which has sometimes incited violence.

### Conflict Dynamics

War weariness seemed to be at the basis of a major political initiative which occurred in the spring of 1998. What has been described as a 'security impasse', or stalemate, forced the antagonists towards political dialogue. Neither of the two main ethnic groups appear to have the capacity either to

physically destroy the other, or to ensure total protection for themselves. A central issue is the mutual suspicion of Hutus and Tutsis, who both genuinely fear that the other group, or at least some extremists within it, is plotting their physical extermination.

The Buyoya government agreed on a political agenda for transition with the re-established National Assembly, thereby partly resolving a long-standing political impasse. The political agreement provided for two vice-presidents, assuring a senior position for each of the main political parties. The National Assembly was enlarged to include more opposition parties and independent representatives from 'civil society'.

Moderates on both sides seemed to gain considerable ground in the political arena. This resulted in a breakthrough. Several rounds of peace talks were held in the second half of 1998 and in 1999 in Arusha. In the summer of 1999, the coordinator of the peace process, former Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere, said he expected an accord between rebels and the government to be signed before the end of the year.

After Nyerere's death in the summer of 1999, former South African president Nelson Mandela took over as facilitator of the peace process in December. Mandela managed to lure the political faction into signing a peace agreement in Arusha on August 28th, 2000. Several rebel groups, including Palipehutu-FNL, refused to commit themselves to the Arusha accords. The accords entailed proposals for deploying international peacekeepers, repatriation schemes for refugees, reconstruction budgets and establishing a national truth and reconciliation commission, inspired on South-Africa's post-apartheid experience. The accord also calls for a transition to democracy. After signing of the agreement the 19 parties involved continued talks on details and issues related to implementation, with apparently little on the agreement becoming a success on the short term. The parties did agree on the composition of the Implementation Monitoring Committee (IMC), set up to oversee implementation of the 28 August peace agreement. The IMC would have 29 representatives drawn from regional governments, the UN, the OAU and the Burundi parties, and an 11-person permanent executive council would be set up within the committee. But key issues such as leadership of the transition period and cease-fire arrangements remained elusive.

At a summit in January 1999, East African leaders decided to suspend economic sanctions against Burundi which had been imposed following the coup in 1996. The measure was taken to encourage the peace negotiations. Meanwhile, the situation in the country remains volatile, with the risk of a renewed escalation of the conflict still being a reality.

The conflict has had a devastating effect on the economy. Due to the recurring attacks, production of tea and coffee - Burundi's main export crop - has

diminished, leading to reduced revenues for both farmers and trading companies. In the late 1990s, the country's brewery, which is majority owned by the Dutch Heineken company, was Burundi's only fully functioning industrial plant and the government's major source of tax revenues. Most other economic activities had come to a halt. After the economic embargo was lifted, the economic situation improved only slightly. The majority of people rely on subsistence agriculture and foreign humanitarian aid for their survival.

Approximately ten per cent of Burundi's rural population lacks secure access to food. While food production has steadily declined since the onset of the crisis, market prices of staple foods have more than doubled. Though the country was food self-sufficient in the late 1980s, Burundi had to rely on an annual average of US \$21 million in food aid between 1994-1997.

The government tried to separate the population from rebel groups by initiating a policy of forcible resettlement of rural populations into 'regroupment' camps in 1996. At its peak, this policy resulted in the 'regroupment' of nearly 300,000 people into 40 to 45 camps. The vast majority of persons in these camps are Hutu, although some are Tutsi. In 1997, the government allowed some of the regrouped persons to return to their homes. Half of the regroupment camps were dismantled by the end of 1997 but an estimated 150,000 people still live in the camps. Human rights organisations, including Amnesty International, have expressed their concern about the 'regroupment' operations. Hundreds of people were allegedly killed by the army during the 'regroupment' operations. Houses have been destroyed, crops burnt and farming activities greatly reduced. Conditions in the remaining camps continue to be appalling with high levels of disease and malnutrition. The military has been responsible for the rape of women and children inside the 'regroupment' camps and incidents of summary executions of civilians continue to be reported. Armed opposition groups have continued attacks on villages and on camps for the displaced.

Despite criticism from abroad, the government in September 2000 again decided to forcibly move people into camps, following weeks of repeated attacks on Bujumbura. The 'regroupment' included 260,000 civilians, according to Amnesty International.

In the summer of 1999, the government unveiled a ten-year transition plan which envisaged the enlargement of the National Assembly to include the groups taking part in the Arusha peace process which are currently not represented in parliament. The plan also announced the establishment of a senate whose composition would be ethnically and regionally balanced. President Buyoya was to remain in office for another five years, and would be succeeded by a Hutu president who would lead the country in the last five years of the transition period.

The working of the National Assembly slowed to a virtual halt on Wednesday and Thursday as rival Tutsi and Hutu political parties disagreed on whether to proceed with regular business or discuss the ratification of the Arusha agreement for peace and reconciliation.

#### Official Conflict Management

Since the massacres of October 1993, the international community has mounted many efforts in preventive action. The response included the appointment of a UN and several other special envoys, a UN commission of inquiry and an OAU military observer mission. The United Nations involvement in Burundi partly evolved through humanitarian organisations such as UNICEF and UNHCR. These agencies came into the country to help internally displaced persons and Rwandan refugees who fled into Burundi during the 1994 genocide. After the October 1993 massacres, the UN sent a special envoy to Burundi as well as a UN commission of enquiry. The UN's efforts came to be closely coordinated with actions taken by the Organisation for African Unity. The OAU sent an observer mission to Burundi in 1994 with the task of trying to reduce tension by monitoring, among other things, the national army's conduct. The coordination between UN and OAU efforts was implemented mainly by entrusting a senior diplomat with the status of both UN and OAU envoy for the region, a position held by Mohamed Sahnoun.

UN special envoy Ould Abdallah strongly influenced the UN's initiatives during his mission in Burundi, which lasted until October 1995 and he reached his goal of avoiding a repetition of the Rwandan massacre. His efforts were focused on democratisation, good governance and development as peace tools. Ould Abdallah was a staunch believer in quiet healing instead of mediation. In September 1994, he brokered a political accord on a new concept of power sharing between the Tutsi led UPRONA party and FRODEBU, the party associated with the Hutu majority. The accord, which became known as the Convention of Government, also encompassed a national debate, which was to include all parties in the conflict in order to bridge the gap between the two ethnic communities.

Since then, the UN's role has attracted somewhat less attention, as its activities have increasingly focused on supporting peace initiatives led by other actors, such as the negotiation process coordinated by the former Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere.

This approach led to a significant breakthrough as Nyerere's successor as facilitator, Nelson Mandela, managed to broker a peace agreement in Arusha, in Tanzania, signed on August 28th, 2000. However, the agreements left a wide range of details regarding its implementation open. Talks, disagreements as well as eruptions of fighting continued way into the winter of 2000 (see conflict dynamics).

In August 1998, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator assembled UN agencies and NGOs in Burundi to review the humanitarian situation and discuss the future course of action. The consultations resulted in a joint strategy for humanitarian assistance and sustainable integration in Burundi. This strategy calls for continued emphasis on timely and effective humanitarian assistance and, simultaneously, increased investment in sustainable reintegration and the foundations of community development in order to solidify the progress towards peace. The strategy was formulated in the Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Burundi by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in December 1998. The UN Humanitarian Coordinator plays an important role in the coordination of the activities of the UN system and international NGOs. The weekly Contact Group meeting, led by the Humanitarian Coordinator, brings together UN agencies, donors, and NGOs to exchange information and initiate activities which effect the entire humanitarian community. In addition, provincial and sectoral committees are organised to ensure that efforts are well coordinated, and feed information into the Contact group. In early 1999, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Burundi presented a broadened community assistance programme that would complement and help strengthen the peace process at grassroots level.

### ***Regional***

Official African initiatives were abundant. South African archbishop Desmond Tutu and former Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere were among senior African officials invited by the Carter Center to start a peace effort for the Great Lakes region in 1995. A first meeting in Cairo was followed by a second round in Tunis in March 1996. In subsequent years, this regional approach died down, and Nyerere was assigned the task of attending the Burundi conflict, which at that time had become the most dominant crisis of the region. In 1998, a new series of talks aimed at resolving the ethnic conflict opened in Arusha (Tanzania) under the chairmanship of Nyerere. He succeeded in scheduling a series of peace conferences to be held between June 1998 and August 1999. Five committees, headed by non-Burundians, must make progress on the following five subjects:

1. the nature of the conflict;
2. democracy and good governance;
3. reconstruction and economic development;
4. peace and security;
5. guarantees for implementation of a peace accord.

The negotiations led to an accord, brokered by Nyeere's successor Nelson Mandela, in August 2000. The main obstacle in Arusha was representation. The army said it was not a warring faction and as such could and should not be included in a cease-fire. The Hutu opposition CNDD was divided after it expelled its vice-president Sendegeya from its ranks. Its armed wing CNDD-FDD reportedly went through a leadership crisis and was not bound by its current leader's signature under the Arusha agreements. The Tutsi-dominated

UPRONA party was internally divided over Arusha and was not officially represented. The Hutu party, FRODEBU, which was divided between an internal Burundian and external exile faction], was fairly united over Arusha. The Palipehutu-FNL, on the other hand, refused to abide by the accord, saying it could not commit itself to a political agreement to the creation of which it had not contributed.

### ***Bilateral***

Some foreign powers have been active in supporting diplomatic initiatives as well as in encouraging non-governmental peace initiatives and human rights interests. The Belgian (Van Craen) and US (Krueger) ambassadors were frontrunners in confronting the army with its actions. EU ambassador Johnstone also dared to address the problem but with quiet diplomacy. This was also translated into donor policies that supported various peace-building initiatives, such as the establishment of an impartial radio production studio (Studio Ijambo) aimed at objective news coverage and reconciliation.

In early 1996 the EU appointed Aldo Ajello, an Italian diplomat and former UN envoy to Mozambique, as special envoy to the region. Ajello partly coordinated his efforts with the special US envoy for the region, Howard Wolpe.

### ***Domestic***

Burundi has a longstanding domestic tradition of reconciliation attempts. As early as 1988, after an outburst of ethnic violence, then-president Pierre Buyoya launched a reconciliation process and issued a Charter of National Unity intended to reduce ethnic rivalries. Although these initiatives never succeeded in defusing ethnic tension, subsequent governments continued to develop similar approaches aimed at stabilising the country.

After the 1994 events in Rwanda, president Ntibantunganya and his ministers toured the provinces for months delivering speeches on reconciliation, however the campaign did not prove successful. The Ntibantunganya government had announced that a national debate would take place on the future of the country in which all sections of society could participate. As part of this plan, a round table talk took place in the town of Gitega in March 1998, offering a platform for dialogue between Burundi actors, without interference of mediators.

Since his return to power in 1996, Pierre Buyoya has been convinced that he can reconcile the Burundi people and in his book *Mission Possible* he wrote that he is committed to moving the political battle away from the traditional Hutu-Tutsi rivalry.

As part of the official national campaign for stability, the government launched a campaign in April 1998, aimed at enabling civilians to defend themselves

against Hutu militia. As part of the campaign, the government began to arm villagers with rifles and grenades. Some villagers accompanied the military in surveillance.

An improved climate emerged from the new political 'partnership agreement', signed in 1998 between the two main parties in the coalition government, FRODEBU and UPRONA. Buyoya also reached an agreement with the FRODEBU-dominated parliament. According to this agreement, Buyoya gave up his right to dissolve the National Assembly, while the legislature gave up its right to veto presidential decrees. In another move, Buyoya cracked down on human rights violators in the military. More than two hundred soldiers who were found responsible for violations were jailed.

In June 1998, the government decided to make a traditional mechanism of conflict resolution - the Abashingantahe institution of arbitration (see section on Multi-Track Diplomacy) - part of the new (transitional) constitution. In the same year, a round table meeting took place in Gitega, which amounted to a significant boost to the still weak internal peace process. The Gitega meeting involved an open political dialogue between a number of leaders of ethnic and political groups, which helped forge consensus on the new transitional constitution. According to some observers, including Christian Scherrer of the Ethnic Conflict Research Project (ECOR), these initiatives amounted to a significant adoption of preventive policies by the government and other major actors in the country. In their judgement, since early 1998 tangible progress has been made on the road towards domestic conflict resolution in Burundi.

## **Multi-Track Diplomacy**

### *Domestic*

Domestic non-governmental initiatives vary from the activities of human rights organisations to initiatives taken by peace organisations such as the Apostles for Peace, also known as the CAP group. The Compagnie des Apôtres de la Paix works for a peaceful resolution of the conflict through education, training and dissemination of basic values associated with traditional local authorities (Abashingantahe). In 1997 and 1998, the Apostles for Peace organised a series of debates, called 'séances vérités', on important themes (including the Arusha talks, the origins of the present crisis, and refugee issues) throughout the country. One of its key objectives is to see whether South Africa's record of peace initiatives applies to Burundi.

Proposals have been written and discussed to set up a type of modernised version of Abashingantahe which will function in a similar way to the 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission' on a national level.

The current Abashingantahe, or Bashingantahe, initiative is a revival of traditional pre-colonial groups of men who were renowned, as mythology has

it, for their sense of truth, justice and responsibility. They settled disputes and reconciled individuals and families. Moves to restore the institution originate from the late 1980s, following ethnic massacres in two communities in northern Burundi. In March 1997, the government of president Buyoya decreed the establishment of a National Council of Bashingantahe, consisting of forty men and women drawn from all ethnic and social groups. The council has discussed national issues, including the negotiations between the government and rebels. It issues recommendations. So far the debates are said to have had little impact on the wider population of Burundi.

In early October 1998, the Human Rights League ITEKA organised a consultation on the peace process, involving 25 local NGOs. The themes discussed were institutional reforms, integrated development, security, justice and impunity and the role of civil society. Militant extremists, both Hutu and Tutsi, have threatened the lives of people investigating human rights violations.

Grassroots church organisations, such as Communautés Ecclesiales de Base, have played a significant role in helping internally displaced people back to their homes, in preaching inter-ethnic peace and in trying to create a sense of security in the hills. They have received substantial support from the Conference of Catholic Bishops and international NGOs.

### *International*

Many international NGOs are engaged in efforts to boost peace in Burundi. They increasingly collaborate with each other, with local organisations as well as with governments and international donors. International Alert was the first foreign organisation that tried to implement preventive programmes in Burundi. It attempted to bring people from different ethnic background together for an open dialogue. With the help of sponsors, the organisation sent 1,000 footballs to Burundi, a symbolic act to show Burundian youth that there are alternatives to violence and militia enrolment. In 1995 International Alert facilitated a study tour to South Africa for 25 senior figures from all sectors of Burundi society. This tour aimed at connecting Burundians to the encouraging example of South Africa's peaceful transfer to democracy and reconciliation. As an immediate consequence of this initiative, the 25 participants formed a Burundian peace group, known as the Company of Apostles of Peace, or the CAP Group.

In collaboration with the CAP Group, International Alert facilitated a visit to Burundi for two local South African community leaders belonging to opposing political groups. The UN Special representative and the South African NGO African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) also contributed to these events. International Alert established the Burundi Steering Committee which coordinates peace-building initiatives taken by

NGOs, the UN representatives and other actors, such as foreign parliamentarians. The London-based organisation also tried to help setting up local Peace Committees, in which civilians and local elders were invited to participate. On the international level, International Alert initiated the establishment of the International Steering Committee for Burundi, comprising representatives of NGOs, donor governments and UN representatives, and responsible for the overall policy direction of IA's peace initiatives in Burundi.

An International Working Group, representing international NGOs, was set up to exchange information and coordinate advocacy programmes on Burundi. Both groups exchanged information in teleconferences. In the summer of 2000, the organisation started a project to boost equal access to education for all ethnic groups in Burundi.

The American NGO Search for Common Ground opened a field office in Bujumbura in 1995 and initiated three programmes aimed at creating mechanisms for ethnic reconciliation. It established the first independent radio studio in Burundi, Studio Ijambo, in March 1995. Ijambo produces unbiased news programmes, and cultural and social magazines. It also produced a soap opera for radio - Our Neighbours, Ourselves - depicting a Hutu and a Tutsi family living next door to each other. Common Ground has also opened a women's peace centre in Bujumbura and started a political dialogue project. The Centre for Women, opened in 1996, works to foster increased cooperation and understanding between Hutu and Tutsi women. It brings women together for debates and, in collaboration with International Alert, helps women who are local leaders to become acquainted with conflict resolution skills.

The Political Dialogue Project addresses the ethnic conflict via quiet diplomacy among the Burundian political players. Negotiations are conducted by Jan van Eck, a former South African parliamentarian, who brings the South African experience of transitional politics to the peace process in Burundi. In 1995, Common Ground, in collaboration with Refugees International, the Council on Foreign Relations Center for Preventive Action and the Africa-America Institute established what is now called the Great Lakes Policy Forum (originally dubbed Burundi Policy Forum). A year later, the European Forum on the Great Lakes was inaugurated in Brussels. These forums are strategic coalitions of concerned NGOs, government agencies and international organisations focusing on the Great Lakes region. Members meet regularly to discuss the latest issues and exchange information. They are unique in that they foster a culture of communication and coordination between NGO and government communities.

In March-July 1997, the Italian Comunità di Sant Egidio, based in Rome, played an important role in bringing the adversaries to the negotiation table. Highly confidential talks in the Italian capital between Burundian government and opposition representatives resulted in the signing of a memorandum

outlining the principles of a peace process and political agreement. After details of the memorandum and the very fact that the government had met rebel representatives became public, radical Tutsi politicians protested and the Rome process stagnated.

Sant Egidio continued its role as a mediator. Mateo Zuppi, one of the organisation's leading figures, is closely involved in the official peace process of Arusha. He is the coordinator of one of the five commissions that have been established to make proposals for a permanent peace accord. Several other NGO initiatives have been taken. The Dutch Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (DRA) started a programme that focuses on peace, reconciliation and development projects in Kinama, Kamenge and Ciboteke zones of Bujumbura.

In 1995, international NGOs engaged in Burundi decided to nominate a NGO security officer to be assigned the task of providing NGOs with information on the security situation in Burundi. Based in Bujumbura, this NGO Security Liaison Officer was considered to be a key factor in enabling NGOs to work in the country.

The International Crisis Group (ICG) is active in the region and in 1997 recommended the establishment of a Truth Commission in Burundi, based on the South African model, or a Research Commission tasked with investigating all massacres since independence. The Forum on Early Warning and Early Response (FEWER) is deeply engaged in the Great Lakes region and supports the Great Lakes network. It provides a forum for information-sharing and advocacy activities by several NGOs in the region.

Synergies Africa, in collaboration with Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS), has focused on the potential role of women in building peace in the Great Lakes region and organised a seminar to discuss the crisis in the area which was attended by women from Burundi across ethnic lines. A FAS delegation of women visited Burundi and organised a three-day workshop with the Ministry of Women's Promotion and Social Action and the Association of Women's NGOs in Burundi (CAFOB). The participants were Burundian women drawn from various political parties and social groups who tried to identify effective conflict resolution techniques for the country. Recommendations were made to the government aimed at mobilising the potential of women's organisations for peace-building.

### *Evaluation*

According to experts from the US Institute for Peace, the Centre for Preventive Action and other observers who have studied the failure of international interventions to stop the violence in Burundi, some mediators and arbitrating organisations fail to see that the conflict is in fact a life-and-death struggle among competing individuals and factions within Burundi's small governing

elite who use coercion and armed force against each other to obtain or retain wealth and power.

Most of the external attention to the conflict, the observers say, tends to focus on the killings and their humanitarian effects, but not on its basic political and military causes. As a consequence the enormous human and financial resources have not been targeted effectively on the specific causes of instability and violence.

According to some observers, several opportunities have been missed. There was also a lack of regular contacts between the monitors on the ground from the academic community on the one hand and high-level diplomats who make decisions about conflict responses on the other.

Two important lessons were drawn from experiences in Burundi. The first is that knowledge about ethnic conflicts, early warning of conflict and crisis, and the array of policies in the 'toolbox' for preventing or managing conflicts is still not being sufficiently disseminated to policy-makers with decision-making authority at high level. The second is that early warning and the implementation of programmes to address the conflict should be better linked. Establishing a permanent policy-planning unit specifically dedicated to prevention has been suggested as a good step to avoid such shortcomings in the future.

### **Prospects**

The suspension of the economic embargo and the return of development assistance in 1999 was expected to contribute to a stabilisation of the new government. This could prevent the biggest danger to the ongoing peace, a new military coup d'état by hard-liners. The signing of the Arusha peace agreement also gave rise to some, albeit feeble, hope, that peace may be within reach during the coming few years. Developments in Burundi are closely linked to developments in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Rwanda. With continued outside support, Hutu extremists may continue to believe that they have more to gain by sticking to their guns than by sitting at the negotiation table. A continuation of the Congo stalemate could act as a magnet for extremists on both sides, with more Tutsi 'volunteers' joining rebel groups fighting President Kabila and more CNDD activists reaching out to Kabila for support. An escalation of the conflict would become even more likely if CNDD and Interahamwe/FAR 'veterans' become major recipients of weapons and money from Kabila and his allies, while a similar alliance is formed between the RPA (Rwandan Peoples Army), the Burundi army and the major Congolese rebel movements.

The chances of bringing an end to violence are highly dependent on implementation of the Arusha peace agreement. Much will depend on the sense of compromise and wisdom exercised by the bilateral commissions in

working out the conditions of national reconciliation. Items likely to have a significant affect on the peace process include the judicial proceedings against the assassins of President Ndadaye, the issue of impunity of soldiers responsible for the killing of civilians, the withdrawal of Burundi troops from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and educational reforms aimed at the inclusion of more Hutu elements at all levels. A transition of the national army under some form of international supervision and cooperation will be necessary to ensure physical protection for both ethnic groups.

### **Recommendations**

The peace process to date has been characterised by a top-down process. In order to create a sustainable peace, observers say, it will be necessary to supplement it with a bottom-up approach, to organise grassroots support for the process and promote local capacity building. To the extent that bottom-up activities have already been deployed, it is obvious these should be strengthened, according to the Ethnic Conflicts Research Project (ECOR) and other organisations. Most obvious in this regard is the necessity of a campaign for peace education on the value of democracy, national reconciliation and respect for human rights, from the primary schools upwards. Donors should use their influence, says ECOR, to help introduce the notion of basic respect for the well-being of citizens.

In December 1997 the European Parliament echoed recommendations from human rights organisations aimed at a better control and greater transparency of arms trafficking to the region, including the reactivation of the UN International Commission of Inquiry (UNICOI) on arms trafficking in the Great Lakes region, and the extension of its mandate to include Burundi. In April 1998 the UN Security Council reactivated UNICOI but did not extend its mandate to Burundi. NGOs have pressed for the rectification of this omission.

The International Crisis Group, in a report released in April 1999, recommended action to be taken by Burundian actors and the international community in order to increase the chance of lasting peace in Burundi: Organisations that are active in the realm of what ICG describes as the three R's - Rehabilitation,

Reconstruction and Repatriation - should not attempt to recreate the Burundian situation of before the beginning of the current crisis, but should try to encompass a deep understanding of the causes of the war in their operations and long-term goals.

Foreign aid should only be resumed on the condition that the Burundian government decides to implement economic reforms that will fight 'clientelisme' and create a strong structure that will reduce the country's dependency on aid in the long-term. In order to avoid the risk that funding might be diverted into military or security-force budgets, donors should seek to

distribute aid at a local level.

Economic recovery is a major prerequisite for ending a conflict, which is partly fuelled by unemployment and the socio-economic exclusion of part of society. International initiatives should not focus exclusively on victims, but also address those responsible for the violence in the country.

Despite its frailty, the national dialogue should be supported. An internal dialogue between all the parties in Burundi's conflict is an essential component of the wider peace process.

Providing assistance to strengthen the judicial system in order to enable Burundians to address the issue of impunity. The constant recall of past killings and exchanges of accusations of atrocities is a major obstacle to reconciliation and dialogue.

Facilitating the repatriation of Burundian refugees in Tanzania would remove an important source of tension in the relationship between Burundi and Tanzania.

The Dutch chapter of *Medicins sans Frontieres* recommends making human rights monitoring one of the highest priorities because of the destabilising effect of violations. The organisation urges international organisations present in Burundi to report on violations on a systematic basis. The installation of an international tribunal for Burundi is also recommended by the medical aid organisation.

The participants of a Burundi conference at the Burundi Bureau in Muenchengladbach, Germany, in October 2000 recommended foreign donors to commit themselves even more on monitoring the funding of the peace process, making sure that all parties to the conflict would be involved.