

Address by His Excellency Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi at the opening of the Conference of the African Anti-Corruption Bodies

Bujumbura, 20 June 2011 (PP) :

1. Allow me first of all to pay tribute to the Almighty God who has blessed our presence here today.
2. Allow me to warmly welcome Chairs of African Anti-Corruption bodies and their delegations. I wish you all a pleasant stay in our beautiful country, Burundi !
3. I am delighted that your prestigious institutions have chosen to organize this important meeting in Burundi and I thank you, for you wanted to share with Burundians your experience in the fight against corruption, a scourge that undermines the development of our continent and elsewhere.
4. I am particularly pleased to speak to you, Heads of African Anti-Graft Bodies and share with you my opinion on corruption and my vision on conditions for an efficient fight against corruption.
5. As you know, for over a decade, the international community has been mobilized against corruption as evidenced by the numerous international and regional conventions designed to coordinate and harmonize efforts in the fight against corruption and many of the countries represented in this conference have signed and / or ratified the UN Convention against Corruption and that of the African Union.
6. But the fact is that Africa, our beautiful and rich continent, is still affected by the phenomenon of corruption. Accept today to learn from our failures to rethink our strategies in the fight against corruption.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. For over a decade, my country, Burundi, was rocked by a fratricidal war which ended with the Arusha Peace Agreement and numerous cease-fire agreements signed with different rebel movements that led to the restoration of democratic and institutional order in 2005.
8. The civil war has not only caused deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent people, crippled the national economy , but also it caused the erosion

of certain moral values in the society as a whole, with as a consequence, lack of respect to human life—formerly a sacred value in Burundi and elsewhere—economic mismanagement, corruption, etc.

9. Negotiators to the Burundian conflict had identified the lack of good governance as the main cause of different tragedies that had bereaved my country since its independence on 1st July 1962.

10. Since its independence, Burundi had suffered many crises and since my accession to the Presidency of Burundi in 2005, I undertook to consolidate peace by creating favourable conditions for national reconciliation and harmonious development of the entire population in an inclusive spirit. Do not forget that considering the historical background, my country has suffered a deep wound.

11. Aware of the urgency of the situation, I have included the promotion of good governance and the fight against corruption at the centre of my political action, enacted new laws to prevent and punish corruption, set up new institutions to promote good governance and the fight against corruption. Thus, a Ministry specifically responsible for governance was created, an Anti-Corruption Court with the Prosecutor General was put in place, a State General Inspection and a Special Anti-Corruption Brigade responsible for awareness, prevention and punishment of corruption crimes and corruption related offences was set up.

12. My deep conviction is that an effective fight against corruption has to be part of a comprehensive long-term global vision and it has to be accompanied by an unshakeable political will. So it would be deceiving ourselves to practise politics that we judge as "rolling at breakneck speed."

13. Indeed, the fight against corruption should aim to change mindsets and behaviour of the whole society which, unfortunately, cannot happen overnight ! As for the political will, it enables the authority to define a political vision, look into failures, face numerous challenges, and capitalize on strengths.

14. Lastly, the political will reassures all the institutions and the people in charge of the management of public affairs ; in particular the people committed to the fight against corruption, and give them courage to persevere in the struggle in spite of failures, scepticism or the reluctance of one another. Note that the phenomenon corruption is not noticed in public services only as facts of corruption are also found in other spheres.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

15. During my recent oath-taking on August 26, 2010, I reaffirmed my political will to continue, without interruption, the fight against corruption and, I clarified my vision which is summarized in these words : “ Strengthening good governance and establishing a culture of accountability at all levels and practise zero-tolerance to corruption”

16. That vision is actually embodied in our “National Strategy for Good Governance and the Fight against Corruption “. This measure and vision draw much from our policy where everyone must be consulted through a participatory method of frameworks for the fight against corruption, poverty, peace consolidation and political dialogue which were initiated, set up and legalized through a participatory method.

17. This strategy reflects not only our personal vision, but also a national consensus because, all along its elaboration, it followed inclusive national consultations on what must be priority objectives and actions for the consolidation of good governance and the fight against corruption, and soon, it will be adopted by the Council of Ministers. Corruption is the society’s ill and it is the society’s responsibility to find sustainable solution to it.

18. Convinced that the promotion and the reinforcement of the principles of good governance in the political, economic and administrative domains constitute prerequisites for the success of the fight against corruption, we have combined the strategy of the fight against corruption with that of good governance. Here, you should understand political good governance, administration and judicial governance, but also economic reforms which are coupled with economic good governance.

19. Thus, the strategy taken in good governance is to establish a culture of accountability at all levels, enhance transparency in governance, build effective public administration, strengthen the rule of law and citizens’ participation and enhance equity and inclusion.

20. As far as the fight against corruption is concerned, the strategy is to put emphasis on a coherent and effective legal framework in accordance with international standards in the fight against corruption, research on corruption phenomenon, the strengthening of operational capacity structures responsible for the fight against corruption, the recovery of property and assets illicitly acquired, increasing transparency in governance, strengthening partnership with civil society and the private sector in the fight against corruption,

education which is very important in raising awareness and prevention, information and public awareness, administration executives and officials ; and finally the break with impunity.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

21. Strategies to fight against corruption can only be effective if they are accompanied by effective mechanisms for implementation, monitoring and assessment.

22. Therefore, the management of the strategy at the political level is ensured by a Council of Ministers while the evaluation will be done every year through a national forum involving both national partners (government, private sector, civil society) and foreign partners.

23. I believe that through this strategy and with the support and commitment of all stakeholders, our fight for the promotion of good governance and the fight against corruption will be successful.

Excellencies Ladies and Gentlemen

24. Our Africa is emerging from a dark past. Indeed, colonisation that was ever lasting has hurt our peoples, caused divisions and the dilapidation of natural resources. Africans then thought that good governance should have as a prerequisite access to independence. They successfully fought for the our States' sovereignty

25. Unfortunately, the management of independent nations was not without problems. The coloniser's reluctance to leave the continent, new governors' hunger for power brought about dictatorships stemming from coups d'Etat, civil wars heightened material and human destructions, poverty, brain drain/migration, refugee movements ; that is the sad reality that followed.

26. Challenges had become numerous. It would have been better to first of all think about restoring peace and democracy, reconstruction and reconciliation to be where we are today, so that we can tackle the question of Good Governance materialised by the fight against corruption and other related offences !

27. There is no fatality therefore because Africa in general, and Burundi in particular, can overcome the scourge of corruption because Africa has resolved to have democracy with all its aspects of good governance. This will take a

pragmatic approach, to avoid discouragement and globalization, because as Marmont once said : "We never should be discouraged, corruption is never complete, there are good people everywhere, and, if not, we must create them". It is our duty, it is your duty !!!

28. Let's make ours the fight which is, of course, one of the world trends that Africans tackle with hesitation. And why ? International policies on good governance have failed in some way. We have also regretfully realised the failure of the structural adjustment policy a few years back, and today, we witness the weakness of the international policy on privatisation that is partly explained by the world financial crisis. Without ignoring advice and strategies suggested by our partners, we ought to have a sovereign courage to reflect and to adapt those to our culture, and to assess them step by step.

29. Yes, in our African culture, which, on its part, has to be distilled to be extirpated of certain behaviours, for the benefit of certain values of good governance ! Here, I call on leaders of different faiths to redouble their efforts in the moralization campaign of the African society to lead it to much responsibility and patriotism. It is this same vision that we learn through religions : to love our neighbour and the love of God.

30. On our part, we have understood that we should not neglect the small but multiple gestures of corruption and embezzlement. Indeed, there cannot be "small corruption" to neglect in order to only evaluate files called "big fish".

31. Let's take this opportunity to share our African experiences and let's be ready to change the ones we have locally to the benefit of more effective strategies applicable in our respective nations.

32. I remain convinced that the largest weapon in this noble struggle is the the mindset and behavioural change by an awareness of our peoples and our respective institutions.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

33. The United Nations Convention against corruption and the Convention of the African Union on the prevention and the fight against corruption are firm especially on the co-operation and the judicial mutual aid among States in order to prevent, detect, investigate and repress acts of corruption and the related offences.

34. The international nature of the corruption phenomenon suggests that there cannot be development without common engagement since the isolation of a State weakens all the other States, thus the importance of the mechanisms of legal co-operation and mutual aid.

35. It would be imprudent to recognize the trans-border nature of criminal phenomena, and at the same time to preserve prevention and investigation measures without the possibility of intervention in all situations where corruption offences are committed.

36. Let us really become a group of States against corruption, able to ensure a constant and reciprocal monitoring between Member States in the fight against corruption and related offences.

37. As to the Government of Burundi, I would like to take this opportunity to reassure members of delegations here present, that we will spare no effort to support this fight as we have always supported initiatives for an effective implementation of the international instruments for the fight against corruption.

38. Before I conclude these remarks, I would like to thank the organisers of this conference, and I reiterate my gratefulness to all of you who have accepted to participate.

39. It is with these remarks that I wish you fruitful deliberations and declare open the conference of the African Anti-Corruption Bodies.

God bless you

Thank you for your attention.