



Statement by His Excellency Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, Permanent Observer of the Holy See
to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva
at the 24th Special Session of the Human Rights Council on Burundi
Geneva, 17 December 2015

Mr. President,

Given the urgent concerns being raised at the international level regarding the human rights situation in Burundi, my Delegation is grateful for your timely action in convening this Special Session. The present crisis, and the obstacles to the exercise of human rights in this country, evoke past tensions that have affected this and other countries in the Great Lakes region. Those tensions, like their tragic consequences, have never been adequately addressed despite subsequent recovery and reconciliation initiatives.

Mr. President,

The Holy See Delegation sincerely hopes that this Council, in close consultation and collaboration with other inter-governmental bodies with appropriate mandate and responsibility in this regard, will take immediate action to:

1. put in place international efforts that guarantee an end to wanton violence and prevent arms trafficking;
2. promote effective, objective, open and transparent efforts at reconciliation, dialogue and peace-building;
3. assure unbiased mediation of the conflict and establish monitored democratic processes that include all sectors of the population;
4. build conditions that will allow the safe and voluntary return of refugees.

Above all, let us keep our deliberations aimed at preserving and defending human rights in Burundi, recalling the words of Pope Francis: "In the work of building a sound democratic order, strengthening cohesion and integration, tolerance and respect for others, the pursuit of the common good must be a primary goal. Experience shows that violence, conflict and terrorism feed on fear, mistrust, and the despair born of poverty and frustration."¹

Thank you, Mr. President.

¹ Pope Francis, Address during Meeting with Authorities and Diplomatic Corps during Visit to Nairobi, Kenya, 25 November 2015, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/november/documents/papa-francesco_20151125_kenya-autorita.html