



EU-, UN-, AU- und Außenpolitik

- The New Times, 24.11.2015 (<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/article/2015-11-24/194664/>)

EALA calls for speedy end to Burundi crisis

By Eugene Kwibuka

THE EAST AFRICAN Legislative Assembly (EALA) has urged Heads of State of the East African Community (EAC) to put in more efforts in pushing Burundians to end their differences and for the Burundian government to restore peace on its territory.

The Assembly's message was delivered, yesterday, by Speaker Daniel Kidega while addressing journalists at the start of EALA's two-week sitting in Kigali.

"We want to applaud the steps that have been taken by the EAC Heads of State toward mediation (in Burundi) but to also appeal to the Summit to up the momentum on the matter," he said.

Human rights activists say that more than 200 people have died in Burundi while about 200,000 have fled their homes as part of violence that erupted after President Pierre Nkurunziza decided to seek re-election.

Several experts, including senior UN officials, have warned that Burundi is at a critical situation and faces a deep political crisis with escalating violence and bodies of dead people being regularly dumped in the streets of the capital, Bujumbura.

"We, as an Assembly, appeal to the government and citizens of Burundi to do all that it takes to restore peace in the country. The Assembly regrets the current deteriorating situation in the country that has led to loss of lives, maimed others, and damaged property. We must prevent a situation that will see the country further degenerate and slide into anarchy," Kidega told journalists.

An extra-ordinary Summit of EAC Heads of State in June appointed Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni to mediate in the Burundian crisis, but analysts say the results from the mediation are far from resolving the conflict.

Kidega urged other international actors, including the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)—an eight-country trade bloc in eastern Africa—the African Union, and the United Nations Security Council to join hands with the EAC Heads of State to ensure that the violence in Burundi is brought to an end.

"The citizens of East Africa are yearning for speedy conclusion or bringing to an end the confusion in Burundi," he said.

Apart from the issue of violence in Burundi, which EALA legislators will discuss through their committee on regional affairs and conflicts resolution, the lawmakers will also examine two key Bills during their two-week sitting in Kigali.

The two draft laws are the EAC Disaster Risk Reduction Bill 2013 and the EAC Forestry Management Bill 2014.

"These two bills are very important to this region in mitigation and dealing with the impact of climate change in this region," Kidega said.

The legislators will also hold consultations with different stakeholders in the country during their stay, including business leaders and government officials.

A special sitting of EALA will also be held today in the afternoon chaired by Senate President Bernard Makuza on behalf of President Paul Kagame.

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EALA to decide on Burundi's move to oust four lawmakers

By James Karuhanga

THE DECISION by Burundi to recall four of its nine representatives in the East African Legislative Assembly (Assembly) has stirred controversy with some saying that the move goes against the Treaty establishing the East African Community (EAC).

Early last week, *The New Times* established that the parliament of Burundi had weeks earlier informed the EALA Speaker about its intention to cease membership of four members of the Burundi delegation.

The four include Jeremie Ngendakumana, a former member of the ruling National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Defence Forces of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) party, and among those who in March opposed President Pierre Nkurunziza's later successful bid for a third term.

Ngendakumana, who was CNDD-FDD party leader from 2007 to 2012, is among some 140 top party members who signed a petition calling on the Burundian President not to run for another term, early this year. He is also among 30 politicians expelled from the party in April.

The other EALA members who have also allegedly fallen out of favour with the political establishment in Bujumbura, are Dr Martin Nduwimana, Frederic Ngenzebuhoro and Yves Nsabimana.

All the four have been asked to relinquish their EALA seats. Nduwimana and Ngenzebuhoro were members of the opposition UPRONA political party. Nsabimana is from the opposition FRODEBU Nyakuri party. As EALA members launched their two-week sitting in Kigali, yesterday, Speaker Daniel Kidega acknowledged he got a letter from Pascal Nyabenda, the Speaker of the Assembly of Burundi informing him that the four "are supposed to lose their seats in the House."

"The Assembly has been on recess but I immediately wrote to the concerned members

to come to the Office of the Speaker so that we can discuss

the matter. I also wrote to the Counsel to the Community (CTC) who has the final legal say on any issue of law related to the East African Community," Kidega told journalists.

Kidega was last evening scheduled to meet with the four MPs. "The CTC has just sent me his views on the matter, and I will eventually sit with the people with whom I manage this Assembly, that is the EALA Commission, and come up with a position that I will communicate to the parliament and the Government of the Republic of Burundi," Kidega said, adding: "But, I must hasten to say that as Speaker of this Assembly, I took an oath to defend and protect the integrity of this House and I will do it to the letter."

One of the affected lawmakers, Ngenzebuhoro, sits on the EALA Commission, the Assembly's top decision making committee which manages the affairs of the Assembly and nominates members of other committees, among other things.

What EAC Treaty says

The most pertinent clause of the EAC Treaty regarding this matter is Article 52: Questions as to Membership of the Assembly.

It stipulates that any question that may arise whether any person is an elected member of the Assembly or whether any seat on the Assembly is vacant shall be determined by the institution of the Partner State that determines questions of the election of members of the National Assembly responsible for the election in question.

It also states that the National Assembly of the Partner States shall notify the Speaker of the Assembly of every determination made.

Ngendakumana, who was at the news conference, said "those in charge" of interpreting the Treaty need to consider things regarding how one gets a seat in the Assembly and how one

loses the seat and then decide what should be done because

what Bujumbura wishes for is contrary to the law.

"What we hear is that they say we lost membership of our party and this is the basis for being removed from the Assembly. But we are not in the Assembly to represent a political party. We are lawmakers of the East African Community," Ngendakumana said.

"I was in the CDD-FDD political party and I used to lead it but when they noticed that we were not agreeing on some issues, they decided 'let's remove this person from the party,' but this does not mean I cannot be a lawmaker of the Community. But let's wait, the law will be read and interpreted appropriately to guide on the way forward."

The quartet reportedly disinclined to travel back home ever since the political tide back home changed.

"I have not gone there for many days due to security concerns," he added. "You've heard people die all the time so we decided to wait. This is not a problem that concerns me alone. People are dying there," Ngendakumana said.

'Not worried'

MP Dr Nduwimana, who was last in Rwanda in June as part of the goodwill mission comprising members of EALA's Standing Committee on Re-

gional Affairs and Conflict Resolution, to assess the status of Burundi refugees as the Assembly moved to seek appropriate intervention, is adamant he will retain his seat until 2017 when the mandate of the current EALA expires.

"My take is very simple," Dr Nduwimana told *The New Times*. "We are members of EALA and we are protected by the Treaty and the Treaty is very clear on the conditions of each member and all aspects regarding the start and ending of our term."

"We are not at all worried about that. We are very much protect-

ed. We are not only in EALA but are firm and I think that it was a

mistake from our brother from the speakership of the National Assembly of Burundi. Maybe he has been very poorly advised. We can understand but it is a very big mistake. If Burundi has some issues with some parties, they better sort out those issues and not export those problems to the regional assembly."

Earlier this month, the Committee on Regional Affairs and Conflict Resolution held a

meeting in which MPs insisted on giving more attention to the Burundi situation during the Kigali sitting. A crucial EAC Summit initially scheduled for end this month is likely to be postponed to give more time for Tanzania which has just concluded presidential elections to get ready.

Last week, representatives of the Pan African Lawyers Union and the East African Civil Society Organization Forum (EAC-SOF) paid the EALA Speaker a call to present a petition on Burundi to the Assembly.

They petitioned the Assembly to urgently undertake specific actions within its mandate to contain the situation in Burundi.

Among others, they want EALA to recommend to the Summit of EAC Heads of State that, next year, Burundi should not assume the rotating Chairmanship of the EAC until it resolves the political, human rights and humanitarian crisis in the country.

Last Friday, the 12-nation International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) announced it pulled its headquarters out of Burundi after months of violence to ensure the "safety and security" of its staff. The ICGLR had been based in Burundi since 2007.

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- The New Times, 24.11.2015

VIOLENCE Govt describes armed opponents as 'terrorists'

Armed vigilantes in Burundi's capital expose deepening crisis

AS DARKNESS FALLS, vigilantes armed with automatic rifles emerge to patrol the streets of Bujumbura, a city plagued by killings and violence as Burundi's crisis deepens.

For months, the trill of cicadas in the tropical night has been interrupted by sporadic gunfire and explosions across the capital, center of the turmoil sparked by President Pierre Nkurunziza's bid for a third term in office.

Thousands initially protested against the president and opposed his re-election in a disputed July vote. Now some have formed vigilante units, coming out at night in tracksuits and jeans, clutching AK-47 rifles as they patrol.

"If the police shoot at us, then, yes, we will fight back," the leader of one group, giving his name only as Fred, told this Reuters photographer, who followed his unit last week. "All hotspot neighborhoods are protecting themselves in this manner."

Residents and vigilantes in other districts confirmed this.

It is the first time a foreign journalist has been allowed to follow such a group, securing images from Bujumbura that will stoke international worries about a new conflict erupting in a nation where an ethnically charged civil war ended just a decade ago after 300,000 people were killed.

The region remains haunted by the 1994 genocide in next-door Rwanda, in which 800,000 people, mostly members of the Tutsi minority and moderates among majority Hutus, were massacred.

Western powers say it must not be repeated in Burundi, which has the same ethnic mix. More than 200 people have been killed in violence since April, although rivalries have tended to run along political rather than ethnic lines so far.

Burundi's government, which dismisses suggestions of a new war, has described its armed opponents as "terrorists", while police say some "armed criminals" come out at night.

Agencies



- The New Times, 24.11.2015 (<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/article/2015-11-24/194668/>)

CNLG urges France to cancel arrest warrants against Rwandan officials

By Eugene Kwibuka

THE NATIONAL Commission for the Fight against Genocide (CNLG) has issued a fresh call for French courts to cancel standing arrest warrants against nine Rwandan officials and senior officers of Rwanda Defence Forces, saying the warrants are politically motivated.

CNLG executive secretary Jean Damascène Bizimana said in a statement yesterday that the French judiciary should emulate Spain that recently cancelled arrest warrants against Rwandan officials after realising that the accusations against them were politically motivated.

In 2006, ex-anti-terrorism French judge Jean-Louis Bruguière accused nine members of the Rwandan government of involvement in the assassination of former Rwandan president Juvenal Habyarimana and his Burundian counterpart, Cyprien Ntaryamira, and issued arrest warrants against the accused following a controversial investigation.

But other French anti-terrorist judges Marc Trévidic and Nathalie Poux, who replaced Bruguière on the plane crash file, have since dismissed Bruguière's thesis that the plane was downed by former soldiers of the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF-Inkotanyi).

After conducting their research in Rwanda, unlike Bruguière who never set foot in the country during his in-

vestigation, Judges Trévidic and Poux concluded in a 2012 report that Kanombe Barracks was the launch site

of the missiles that brought down the former president's plane.

Since the barracks was tightly guarded by ex-FAR (the national army during Habyarimana's government), under the authority of Colonel Théoneste Bagosora, a key mastermind of the Genocide committed against the Tutsi, the French judges concluded that the president's plane might have been shot by Hutu extremists who went on to commit the Genocide.

CNLG officials say that since "an opaque silence" has followed findings of investigating judges Poux and Trévidic, the French judiciary should realise that Rwandan officials have no case to answer and cancel arrest warrants against them.

"It is time that a dismissal is delivered for people affected by the unjustified arrest warrants issued by Judge Bruguière, based on motives other than judicial. Such a decision would silence some voices who espouse the theory of double genocide and whose master thinkers include members of association "France Turquoise"," said Dr Bizimana in the statement.

He said that members of "France Turquoise" include French military officers who played a role in the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, such as General Jacques Hogard, Jean-Claude La Four-

cade, Jacques Rosier and Michel Robardey.

The officers are "founding members of the Association France-Turquoise, whose purpose is the justification of the role of its members in the Genocide against the Tutsi, denial of planning (of the Genocide) and deliberate demonisation of Rwandan authorities", Bizimana said.

The official said that Spanish arrest warrants, which were cancelled recently, had been inspired by French judge Jean-Louis Bruguière and they were aimed at destabilising the government in Kigali.

"It is therefore high time for the French courts, like the Spanish justice, to distance itself from the clutches of some military-political influences of certain individuals that were involved in some way in the Genocide against the Tutsi. Justice wherever it is requested and issued, shall be independent and respectful of the people. The French justice should understand this and follow reasonable and meaningful steps towards the real justice," he said.

All the Rwandan officials indicted by Bruguière fought in the liberation war that stopped the Genocide and defeated Habyarimana's regime.

CNLG says that cancelling the arrest warrants against the officials would honour the victims and survivors of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

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- The New Times, 25.11.2015 (<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/article/2015-11-25/194706/>)

Govt presses for robust global agreement on climate change

By Athan Tashobya

RWANDA BELIEVES that a new international agreement on climate change, with a concrete action plan, will go a long way in addressing the threat of climate change, the Ministry of Natural Resources has said.

In a statement issued yesterday, ahead of the 21st Conference of Parties in Paris (COP21) due in December, the government urged developed countries to help developing countries in climate change mitigation efforts.

"The country is calling on developed nations to do more to reduce emissions as well as ensure better financing for climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts in developing nations," reads part of the statement.

In Paris, Rwanda will join other climate vulnerable countries to advocate for increased mitigation ambitions to limit global average temperature increases to below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

In a recent preparatory meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, Rwanda's delegate to the One Young World Forum in Bangkok, Isabelle Kamaliza, said with 80 per cent of the population dependent on agriculture, Rwanda is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and has suffered its portion

in recent years due to an increase in droughts and floods.

The ministry stated that the mountainous East African country with a variable climate, is at risk of increased weather extremes such as floods and droughts.

The Minister for Natural Resources, Dr Vincent Biruta, noted that the country would also advocate for an agreement that includes provisions for financial and technological support to enable climate vulnerable countries to deal with the loss and damage associated with climate change.

"We will also share our experience in implementing innovative environment conservation programmes and work with international partners to mobilise resources. Our ultimate objective is to reach an agreement that prevents the worst impacts of climate change and that supports countries like Rwanda to respond and adapt to a warming planet," Biruta said.

Rwanda's efforts to climate change mitigation have not gone unnoticed by climate change activists, in the recent past.

Kamaliza noted that through the monthly community service, Umuganda, government pioneered programmes such as banning plastic bags and establishment of green villages across the country, Rwanda is doing well in addressing cli-

mate change.

Rwanda's commitment to addressing climate change has also been demonstrated in establishment of a national fund for the environment and climate change that finances climate resilience projects and leverages private sector investments across the country.

The work of the fund, believed to be one of the largest of its kind in Africa, will be presented at climate forums in Paris to share experiences and attract additional financing needed for local action, according to the statement.

Minister Biruta added that Rwanda—as a party to the UN convention on climate change—expects the Paris summit to come up with a new agreement that enables all countries to combat climate change effectively and accelerates the transition towards low-carbon societies and economies.

"Rwanda hopes that the new global agreement to be adopted at the Paris Climate Summit will be binding on all nations and reaffirm the obligations of developed countries to provide the climate finance and technological support needed for climate vulnerable countries to adapt."

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- The New Times, 26.11.2015 (<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/article/2015-11-26/194743/>)

EALA overrules Burundi move to recall lawmakers

By Collins Mwai

THE EAST AFRICAN Legislative Assembly (EALA) has overruled a decision by the Burundian Parliament to recall four of its nine representatives in the regional assembly.

During its session in Kigali yesterday, the Assembly further introduced a motion to protect members from intimidation and threats in the future and to ensure that they fully serve their terms.

Burundi's Parliament, through its Speaker Pascal Nyabenda, had written to the EALA Speaker, Daniel Kidega, informing him about its intention to recall four out of its nine representatives.

The four members include, Dr Martin Nduwimana, Frederic Ngenzebuhoro, Yves Nsabimana and Jeremie Ngendakumana.

However, after consultations and review of the treaty guiding the East African Community integration process, Kidega said they found the move by Burundi not tenable and contravening the EAC Treaty.

Kidega said after receiving the letter recalling MPs, he consulted with the Counsel to the Community who has the final legal say on any issue of law related to the East African Community and also reached out to the members in question.

"After consultation with the relevant offices, I have found it not tenable, that the members -said in this letter that their membership has ceased because the letter was centrally to article 51 of the Treaty regarding membership of the Assembly," Kidega told the Assembly yesterday, to a loud applause from the audience.

The House also expressed concern over the move by Burundi terming it as a "raid on the Assembly, its independence and privileges."

Through a motion moved by MP Abubakr Adbi Ogle, from Kenya, as a matter of urgency, the lawmakers noted that the move by Burundi was unacceptable as it breached the Treaty and undermined the Assembly.

The motion, seconded by Rwandan representative Dr James Ndahiro seeks to protect members from intimidation, harassment and threats.

"We condemn in the strongest terms possible all attempts to undermine the authority of the Assembly and the privileges of members," ogle said.

Ogle said the motion aimed at protecting the sanctity and independence of the Assembly.

"Though all members here are members of a political party, issues within a political party should not

cause the party to withdraw the members," he observed.

Dr Ndahiro, on his part, said the motion was meant to uphold the principle of the Treaty and to ensure that national politics did not interfere with the House business.

"This Assembly should stand up to such intimidation, not because of us but for the good of the assembly," Ndahiro said.

The Speaker referred the Burundi matter to the committee on Legal, Rules and Privileges as a matter of urgency.

Meanwhile, MP Abdullah Mwinyi, of Tanzania brought up an issue of reported mistreatment of the EAC Secretary General Dr Richard Sezibera while on an official mission in Burundi.

"We need to clearly look into the issue as it raises questions on the privilege of a member of the House," Mwinyi said.

Noting that the matter was also of grave importance and concern, Kidega ordered that the matter be discussed in today's session.

Earlier this month, the Committee on Regional Affairs and Conflict Resolution held a meeting in which MPs insisted on giving more attention to the Burundi situation during the Kigali sitting.

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- The New Times, 26.11.2015 (<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/article/2015-11-26/194744/>)

MPs endorse Rwanda's re-admission to ECCAS

By Eugene Kwibuka

THE CHAMBER of Deputies has passed a draft law that allows the government to ratify an agreement that re-admits the country to the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).

Rwanda officially rejoined ECCAS in May, eight years after it pulled out of the regional bloc to "avoid overlapping memberships in several regional community groupings."

Government officials said the country was rejoining the bloc to further its integration agenda, explaining that the membership consolidates Rwanda's position in the heart of Africa.

The re-admission of Rwanda took place during an annual Conference of Heads of State and Government of ECCAS in N'djamena, Chad, in May, during which an agreement on the re-admission was signed.

But for the process to rejoin the bloc to be complete, the agreement has to be ratified, which requires approval from both chambers of Parliament.

The Chamber of Deputies yesterday did their bit, approving a bill that authorises the government to ratify the agreement.

Article one of the draft law says that "the Agreement between the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Republic of Rwanda on the readmission of Rwanda in such a Community, signed in N'Djamena in Chad on May 25, is hereby authorised to be ratified."

Following Rwanda's readmission to ECCAS, the bloc now has eleven members including: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Democratic Republic of Con-

go, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Chad, and Sao Tome & Principe.

Rwandan diplomat Olivier Nduhugirehe says that Rwanda's readmission into ECCAS consolidates its position at the heart of Africa given its other memberships to the East African Community (EAC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR).

While visiting Rwanda last month, the Secretary-General of ECCAS said that Rwanda will be an inspiration of good governance, regional integration, and conflict resolution for other member countries of the bloc.

Ahmad Allam-Mi said he thought Rwanda's leadership could bring many aspects of good governance to ECCAS.

"The country's experience of good governance, which is known worldwide, can eventually contribute toward fixing ECCAS. The leadership of President Kagame, who is considered as a champion of good governance ethics in Africa, can also contribute to the integration of Central African countries," he said.

The official lauded Rwanda for being the "beacon of integration and free movement of people in Africa," citing the fact that the country doesn't require visas for Africans crossing its borders.

The law allowing the government to ratify the agreement that re-admits Rwanda to ECCAS now awaits Senate's approval before it can be forwarded to the President for assent and subsequent ratification.

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Innenpolitik

- The New Times, 23.11.2015 (<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/article/2015-11-23/194645/>)

Parliament passes bill on oil

By Rodrigue Rwirahira

PARLIAMENT has passed a bill governing the prospecting and exploitation of petroleum products that now waits President's assent.

The bill, passed last week, provides a regulatory framework for the development and management of upstream petroleum activities.

According to Evode Imena, the State Minister in charge of mining at the Ministry of Natural Resources, preliminary prospecting results show that Lake Kivu could be having massive oil reserves.

He said that surveys were conducted using planes and boats that scanned potential zones of the reserves using two dimension seismic studies.

As opposed to the perception that only financial muscled companies will take up the business, Rwanda's private sector players have expressed interest in the prospects.

Stephen Ruzibiza, the chief executive officer of Rwanda Private Sector Federation (PSF), commended

the move to have a legal framework, saying the standards set will guide investors.

"Although I cannot disclose local players who have expressed interest in the upcoming oil exploration projects, what I can say is that we won't be left behind," he said.

Imena said the Government took into consideration what transpired in neighbouring countries with the oil mineral resource to design a favourable law.

Article 15 of the draft law states that where petroleum has been discovered in an exploration area, prospectors shall inform the line ministry on the commercial potential.

"The exploration licensee must, not later than ninety (90) days from the date on which the discovery was made, provide the Minister a notice stating that the discovery is, or is not, in the opinion of the licensee, of potential commercial interest," reads the article.

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- The New Times, 25.11.2015 (<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/article/2015-11-25/194708/>)

Parliament paves way for referendum on term limit

By Eugene Kwibuka

THE ANTICIPATED referendum on lifting of presidential term limits moved a step closer as Parliament forwarded the proposed constitutional amendments to government, yesterday.

The Lower House passed a draft law proposing amendments to the Constitution, a step that will be followed by a national referendum for citizens to decide on new provisions in the draft law about presidential term limits.

It is not yet clear when the referendum will take place but everything that has to be done before it is organised will have to be done as fast as possible because that is the wish of citizens, according to MPs.

"Citizens have told us that they want the referendum to happen before the end of the year. It's up to the government to consider people's wish," Deputy Speaker of Parliament in charge of administration, Abbas Mukama, said yesterday.

Parliament initiated changes to the country's supreme law after more than 3.7 million Rwandans (59 per cent of eligible voters) had petitioned the House to review the law to allow President Paul Kagame to continue his stewardship of the country beyond 2017 when his second term in office expires.

Following countrywide consultations on the issue by Members of Parliament, the Chamber of Deputies made amendments to the Constitution, which were later endorsed by senators.

The draft law passed by Parliament on Monday reduces presidential term limits from seven to five years renewable only once.

But the change will be preceded by one transitional presidential term of seven years for which any presidential candidates, including President Paul Kagame – should he choose to run – will be eligible.

A raft of other changes were also made in the Constitution, ranging from the vetting process of the Senate, and senators' term in office, to modalities under which a former president vies for a senatorial position.

"Parliament is glad that it has well completed the Constitutional review process," Donatille Mukabalisa, the Speaker of Parliament, told journalists on Monday.

Mukabalisa explained that the draft law amending the Constitution is handed to the government so that it can organise a referendum on the amendments.

"We are going to send the bill to the government and request it to prepare the referendum as it is required by the law because there is a provision in the reviewed Constitution whose approval requires a referendum," the Speaker said, alluding to provisions about presidential term limits.

Mukama told *The New Times* that the draft law was last evening sent to government.

The latest voters' register at the National Electoral Commission indicates that at least 6.3 million Rwandans will be eligible to vote.

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- The New Times, 26.11.2015 (<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/article/2015-11-26/194739/>)

Cabinet asks President Kagame to call a referendum on Constitution

By Eugene Kwibuka

MEMBERS OF the Cabinet yesterday asked President Paul Kagame to call a referendum for Rwandans to approve the recently revised Constitution of the country.

The decision was reached during an Extraordinary Cabinet Meeting chaired by Prime Minister Anastase Murekezi, which was held at Village Urugwiro.

The decision is a response to the request made by Parliament on Tuesday which asked the government to enforce legal provisions regarding a referendum on the 2015 Revised Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda of June 4, 2003.

"Pursuant to Articles 109 and 193 of the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda of 04 June 2003, as amended to date and considering where the country has come from, its achievements and future perspectives, the Cabinet meeting approved to request the President of the Republic to call a Referendum on 2015 Revised Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda of 04 June 2003," says a Cabinet release issued yesterday.

The Parliament on Monday passed the revised Constitution, which can only be adopted once approved by citizens through a national referendum.

The requested referendum will be on the entire revised Constitution including presidential term limits.

"The request forwarded to him (President Kagame) is for a referendum on the revised Constitution because the revision was wide and far reaching and

it includes provisions that mandatorily require a referendum to be revised," Minister for Justice and Attorney-General, Johnston Busingye, told The New Times yesterday.

Prior to responding to the request from Cabinet, the President will first seek advice from the Supreme Court as required by law.

Article 109 of the current Constitution says that "upon the proposal of the Cabinet and after receiving an advisory opinion of the Supreme Court, the President of the Republic may call a referendum on issues of general national interest, on a bill of an ordinary law, on a bill of an organic law or decree relating to the signature of an international treaty or agreement which is not inconsistent with the Constitution but has repercussions on functioning of state institutions".

The article says that "should the referendum adopt the proposal, the President of the Republic promulgates it within a period of eight days as from the time of proclamation of the results of the referendum".

Citizens have told lawmakers that they want a referendum on the Constitution to happen before the end of the year.

Parliament initiated changes to the country's supreme law after more than 3.7 million Rwandans (59 per cent of eligible voters) had petitioned the House to review the law to allow President Kagame to continue leadership of the country beyond 2017 when his second term in office expires.

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Wirtschaft

- The New Times, 23.11.2015 (<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/article/2015-11-23/194643/>)

Govt to launch \$100m fund for emerging ICT enterprises

By Michel Nkurunziza

THE GOVERNMENT is set to launch an innovation fund for small and medium enterprises in the information and communications technology (ICT) sector to spur entrepreneurship and job creation, officials at the Ministry of Youth and ICT have said.

The fund, to be launched by June 2016, will target small and emerging ICT related enterprises, mostly run by the youth.

Didier Nkurikiyimfura, the director-general of ICT at the ministry, told *The New Times* last week that the innovation fund will be rolled out in partnership with Rwanda Development Board.

He noted that the concept, which is in its final stages before implementation, would also involve partnering with the private sector for funds mobilisation.

"We are finalising the idea and have about six months to fully develop the concept and mobilise funds. We are going to design an operational structure of the fund that will start with \$100m (about Rwf 74.5bn) and to set up criteria for those to benefit before the launch by June next year," he said.

Of the total \$100m targeted in the fund, the Government will contribute up to 30 per cent, while the rest will be mobilised from private sector partners who will have shares in the fund.

The fund will begin with about 100 beneficiaries.

Among the objectives of the fund is to reduce unemployment levels, as well as foster job creation among the youth.

The recently published fourth Integrated Household Living Condition Survey (EICV4) indicated that about 13 per cent of university graduates do not get jobs with one or two years of completion of their studies.

Part of the thought process behind the innovation fund was to address the sponsorship and funding challenges experienced by emerging enterprises in the ICT sector.

"In different parts of the country we do not have enough sponsors to support and fund SMEs and other projects related to ICT. This is an opportunity to close the gap and help the youth to benefit," Nkurikiyimfura said.

Experts in the sector say, once operational, the fund will spur innovation and lead to growth in the number of enterprises operating in the area.

Dr Bernabe Twabagira, the principal of IPRC South, a technical and vocational college, said the fund would go a long way in addressing challenges associated with financing that have for long held back ICT enterprises.

"There are many innovations among the youth, but they lack financing," he said.

The initiative is expected to facilitate the achievement of targets of the recently adopted Smart Rwanda Master Plan that aims at facilitating existing indigenous companies in their competitiveness and efforts to grow to global player status.

The five-year plan, whose implementation is set for 2016, targets to have about 100 indigenous companies with market capitalisation of \$50 million and 50 stock market listable companies.

This is expected to drive up the ICT sector contribution to GDP from 3 per cent today to 5 per cent, and to create about 100,000 new jobs by 2020.

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Gesellschaft

- The New Times, 25.11.2015 (<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/article/2015-11-25/194702/>)

New project to address special needs of disabled children

By Eddie Nsabimana

THE VOLUNTARY Services Overseas (VSO) has rolled out a project that seeks to help children living with disabilities to access education and healthcare.

The 'Special Needs Education Activities' project is part of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Literacy, Language and Learning (L3) Plus Initiative, which has been running in mainstream schools during the last three years, with US\$5 million already spent on it.

Papa N. Diouf, the VSO country director, said the project would fill the gap, help disabled children go to school and reduce the dropout rates among children with special needs.

"A number of parents feel that giving birth to a disabled child is a burden to them and they end up violating their rights, especially to education and health. We therefore, need to train them on the disabled children's rights in order to reduce the dropout rate and make them free to access healthcare as well," he said.

He was briefing journalists in Kigali on Monday.

The project's activities include providing skills, resources and materials for educators, parents, healthcare providers, Community Health Workers and National Council for People with Dis-

abilities (NCPD) representatives to achieve improvement in education, care and support of children with special needs as well as effecting change in attitudes among the wider community.

Findings by VSO indicate that 64 per cent of disabled children are not allowed to go to school, with 90 per cent having physical disabilities, 22 per cent not able to speak while 48 per cent have intellectual disabilities, contrary to 87 per cent of normal students who now have access to education.

Antoine Niyitegeka, the project coordinator, said it is every child's right to access education and healthcare.

"Education is open to all and it is every child's right. It's a pity to see parents denying their disabled children the right to education," Niyitegeka told *The New Times*.

Launched in May, the project is running in Gasaka, Tare and Uwinkingi sectors in Nyamagabe District and in Kibeho, Rusenge and Mata sectors in Nyaruguru District.

Two resource centres have already been opened in Nyamagabe and Nyaruguru districts and they will be acting as data hubs, where information about children with disabilities will be shared to prevent any of them from missing the opportunity to benefit from this project.

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Bildung

- The New Times, 23.11.2015

Counting the fruits of early childhood devt programmes

By Jean d'Amour Mbonyinshuti

OVER THE PAST four years, Peter Maniraguba has been working as a caregiver in his neighbourhood taking care of children below six years of age.

He helps the children with Early Childhood Development (ECD) and also supports preschool kids.

Maniraguba says the programme has been successful and helps children acquire basic skills in preschool programmes.

"We teach them a lot of things, including discipline, hygiene, counting and alphabet, doing practical exercises, among others," he says.

"This programme helps our children in skills development and you find them different from those who never attend preschool programme."

The programme is spearheaded by Save the Children International in partnership with the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion.

It is a five-year programme that has benefited more than 10,000 children in Burera, Rubavu, Gicumbi and Ruhango districts.

Save the Children also helps in Early Literacy and Math Initiative.

The initiative runs in areas where it is difficult to apply preschool programme. It involves parents who undergo a partial training on how they can take care of their children at a tender age.

Parents are trained that taking care of children is not only about feeding them but also helping them to learn how to count, tell short stories and other programmes that stimulate a child's perceptive abilities.

According to officials and parents, this has proved to be relevant and has helped more than 2,800 parents to change ways of caring for their children.

Officials and parents believe that such programmes help children to easily cope with environment when they enroll in

mainstream education compared to those who enroll without attending preschool programmes.

"My child attended early childhood development programme and has shown a difference compared to his siblings; children are disciplined and what they are taught is applied at home," says Velenine Nyiramahoro, one of the parents.

Florentine Uwamariya, another parent who has benefitted from the parenting programme, says she is now knowledgeable on issues to do with childcare.

"We sit with other parents and discuss how we can help our children develop cognitive abilities. We now look beyond breast-feeding and feeding to teach them how to count, tell stories, alphabet, among others," said Uwamariya.

"We are happy that we are developing our skills and those of our children, the training we acquire here is of great significance and we are optimistic that the performance of our children will be commendable in the future."

According to Lilirose Mukantagwera, the Early Childhood Education coordinator at Save the Children, care centres have been set up where children are inducted for mainstream education.

Mukantagwera said studies showed that children who are trained in early childhood education perform well compared to those who don't get a chance.

The strongest evidence suggests that economically disadvantaged children reap long-term benefits from preschool.

Samuel Sembagare, the mayor of Burera District, hailed Save the Children for the role played in developing skills of young ones, saying such skills offer a good foundation for child growth.

Sembagare urged parents to keep playing a core role in educating their children and ensure the children benefiting from early childhood programmes gain the necessary knowledge.

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Sport

- The New Times, 23.11.2015 (<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/article/2015-11-23/194644/>)

Team Rwanda dedicates Tour du Rwanda win to Kagame

By Peter Kamasa

MOMENTS after winning the 2015 Tour du Rwanda cycling race on Sunday, Team Rwanda riders paid tribute to President Paul Kagame for his support, which they said was the single most important factor behind their continued rise.

Jean Bosco Nsengimana of Team Rwanda (Karisimbi) won this year's race clocking 23h54'50, having ensured that the iconic yellow jersey remained his throughout the entire eight-day international competition.

Following last year's triumph in the same competition that was then won by Valens Ndayisenga, President Kagame hosted Team Rwanda stars to a dinner at Kigali Serena Hotel during which he offered to buy them state-of-the-art bikes. Indeed the President honoured his promise two months ago, delivering 18 road bikes and eight time trial bikes – giving the team a major boost ahead of the 2015 Tour du Rwanda.

Nsengimana is one of the four Rwandans that finished in top five, with Joseph Areruya (Team Akagera) coming in second having used 23h56'35", while Camera Hakuzimana (Rwanda Muhabura – 23h57'35") and Patrick Byukusenge (Team Karisimbi – 23h57'54") coming in third and fifth place respectively.

Eritrean Eyob Metkel (Team Bike-Aid) finished in fourth having clocked 23h57'52" for the entire race.

Following Nsengimana's triumph yesterday, all the riders of the three Team Rwanda clubs celebrated on the podium together, waving a message, "We thank you Mr. President, this victory is yours".

The race winner Nsengimana said: "This is a great moment for me but it is also the result of the work of the whole team and the support from our beloved President, Paul Kagame".

"My teammates and I worked so hard to win this year's Tour du Rwanda and we dedicate this win to the President, as a reward for his continued support," Nsengimana said on crossing the finish line at the end of State Seven – in front of thousands of adoring fans.

He added: "I am excited and I thank President Kagame for the gifts (bikes) he has given us which helped us win this Tour. He has been there for us. I am also thankful to my teammates, my coaches, federation, the National Police, our supporters and everyone who else who has been there for us."

"The whole country has been behind us. Every day I would wake up with a conviction that we can do it because of them. Many people lined up the streets to encourage us and I am happy that we have indeed done it," explained the 22-year old rider, who becomes the second Rwandan to win Tour du Rwanda since it became a UCI Africa 2.2 category in 2009.

Last year's winner, Ndayisenga, who withdrew from the just-concluded race on stage five due to illness, saluted Nsengimana. "I am happy for him. Last year he helped me to win the race and, this year I also tried to give him my support, unfortunately, I couldn't complete the Tour."

The 22-year old romped to victory after a consistent display over the seven stages of the Tour to enter history books as the second Rwandan after Ndayisenga to win the competition, and the first to lead the eight-day race from start

to finish.

Nsengimana won the prologue before winning two stages, Kigali-Musanze (102.7km) and Rubavu-Kigali (156.5km).

The newly crowned Tour du Rwanda champion went home with US\$1800 (about Rwf1,350,000) besides the much-coveted yellow jersey. He also bagged US\$320 for winning the prologue and US\$1280 for the two stages he also won.

He also received a cheque worth Rwf1 million from CogeBanque for winning the Tour, taking his total earning from the competition to Rwf4,651,800.

The first overall all runner-up Team Rwanda Akagera's Joseph Areruya, 19, received Rwf500,000 and Canal+ subscription for a whole year (a bouquet is about Rwf90,000 a month) courtesy of Canal+.

Rwandans dominated the race since last Sunday, leaving no chance to their opponents from especially Eritrea, Morocco and France.

"The Rwandans' pace was great and they enjoyed the advantage of knowing the roads," said Jérémy Bescond, a former French professional rider.

Nsengimana also won the award for the best African, best Rwandan and best young rider while Eritrean Amanuel Gebrezgabihier was named best mountain climber. Nsengimana and Areruya were among named among the best five climbers.

Rwanda's Sports and Culture minister Julienne Uwacu said: "Congratulations Team Rwanda, winning Tour du Rwanda for the second time is a result of hard work, team spirit and concentration."

Since 2009, Eritrea has won sixteen Tour du Rwanda stage wins, following by Rwanda with 10 stage wins, Morocco (9) and South Africa with 8.

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