



UNHCR
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés



JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

22nd Meeting of the Tripartite Commission for the Voluntary Repatriation of Burundian Refugees living in Tanzania

Bujumbura, Burundi, 19 May 2021

The 22nd Meeting of the Tripartite Commission for the Voluntary Repatriation of Burundian Refugees living in Tanzania was held at hotel club *du lac Tanganyika*, Bujumbura, on 19 May 2021.

The Delegation of the Republic of Burundi was led by **H.E. CPC Gervais Ndirakobuca**, Minister of Interior, Community Development and Public Security of the Republic of Burundi.

The Delegation of the United Republic of Tanzania was led by **H.E. George Simbachawene**, Minister of Home Affairs of the United Republic of Tanzania.

The Delegation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was led by **Mr. Abdul Karim Ghouli**, UNHCR Representative in Burundi.

The tripartite commission:

- **Acknowledged** the spirit and the provisions of the Tripartite Agreement on the Voluntary Repatriation of Burundian Refugees in Tanzania of 8 May 2001 (hereby referred to as the Tripartite Agreement), which has since then guided all voluntary returns to Burundi from Tanzania in conformity with international conventions and national laws;
- **Noted** that from September 2017 to 30 April 2021, the concerned parties have jointly facilitated the voluntary repatriation of 120,456 Burundian refugees from the United Republic of Tanzania in safety and dignity;
- **Appreciated** the commitment from the parties to continue facilitating the voluntary repatriation of Burundian refugees in the United Republic of Tanzania who are

willing to return to their country of origin in accordance with the principles guiding voluntary repatriation;

- **Recognized** the traditional hospitality and generosity of the Government and the people of the United Republic of Tanzania, which has been receiving thousands of refugees for decades. Tanzania currently hosts 269,171 refugees and asylum seekers, of which approximately 189,941 are Burundian;
- **Recognized** the firm willingness of the Government of Burundi to receive Burundian Refugees who voluntarily want to go back home;
- **Noting** that the situation in Burundi had improved since the last Tripartite Commission on 29th November 2019;
- **Noted** that while some refugees may opt to return now, others may still have well-founded reasons for not seeking to return at the present time and will continue to benefit from international protection;
- **Welcomed** that the United Republic of Tanzania, in the pursuance of its international obligations, will continue to keep its doors open to those refugees who meet the relevant criteria of the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees read together with its 1967 Protocol and the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa;

Decides to:

1. Observe WHO, Regional, National, COVID-19 prevention and control protocols throughout the process of voluntary repatriation.
2. Consider embarking on promoting voluntary repatriation contingent to conducive conditions in areas of return and resources' availability for reintegration purposes. A roadmap with key benchmarks will be developed by the parties and reviewed for consideration at the next Tripartite Commission meeting.
3. Organize two return convoys per week with a maximum of 700 people per convoy, respecting the principle of voluntariness, safety, and dignity.
4. Improve the transit centres and respect COVID-19 measures as appropriate.
5. Review and improve the road infrastructure to facilitate the movement of voluntary repatriation convoys.
6. Increase advocacy and mobilization of resource efforts to support voluntary repatriation and make reintegration in Burundi sustainable.
7. Organize "Go and See" visits and "Come and Tell" to enable refugees to make an informed decision on their return.
8. Provide advance information on returnees' luggage requiring customs clearance to facilitate a smooth return process.
9. Adopt the Report and the Workplan of the 25th Technical Working Group of the Tripartite Commission for the Voluntary Repatriation of Burundian Refugees living in Tanzania appended in **Annex I and II**, respectively.

