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Demobilization Starts in Burundi

Bujumbura, 3 December 2004 - The President of Burundi, H.E. Domitien Ndayizeye, officially launched demobilization activities at the Muramvya Demobilization Center on December 2, 2004. The opening ceremony of the Burundi Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration Program was attended by cabinet members, parliamentarians, senior officers of the Armed Forces of Burundi (FAB), as well as representatives of all Armed Political Parties and Movements (APPMs), the diplomatic community, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, heads of several United Nations agencies and the World Bank.

In a symbolic gesture, the President and the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Ms. Carolyn McAskie, jointly set ablaze 100 assault rifles utilized during the conflict. The President also met with the first group of 216 ex-combatants to be demobilized. These ex-combatants are volunteers from the FAB and all six APPMs that have signed an agreement with the Government. On this occasion, the Minister of Defense reaffirmed the commitment of the FAB to support the demobilization process in Burundi.

The primary objective of the Program is to support the demobilization, reinsertion and reintegration of up to 55,000 Burundian combatants in the coming five years. As such, it will serve as a key instrument to support the consolidation of the peace process and security sector reform in Burundi. The Program is also expected to facilitate a significant reallocation of public resources from defense spending to social and economic sectors. An estimated 14,000 combatants will be demobilized under the first phase of the Program, in advance of the elections planned for April 2005.

During the demobilization process, ex-combatants will remain in three Demobilization Centers for a period of up to ten days for registration; counseling on civilian life, program benefits, reconciliation and human rights; medical screening; HIV/AIDS sensitization, voluntary counseling and testing before they are discharged. After demobilization, ex-combatants will receive reinsertion and reintegration assistance through the Program. Reinsertion assistance will consist of counseling and cash transitional subsistence allowances based upon rank. The minimum payments will be the FBU equivalent of US\$515, to be paid in four tranches over 10 months. In addition, the program will finance a range of reintegration activities, including micro-projects, the provision of seeds and tools, shelter, education, vocational training, and labor-intensive public works. This assistance will be closely linked with broader recovery efforts in Burundi. Furthermore, the Program will provide specialized social, medical and economic reintegration assistance to female ex-combatants, disabled ex-combatants and their families, and former child soldiers.

The Executive Secretariat of the National Commission for Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration (NCDRR) of the Government of Burundi oversees and coordinates the implementation of the Program. The NCDRR will work in close collaboration with several key partners. The United Nations Operation in



Burundi (ONUB) will be responsible for disarmament, the provision of security during the initial phases of the process, and will coordinate related military and police integration and security sector reform efforts. Joint Liaison Teams of the Joint Ceasefire Commission will observe disarmament and the verification of combatant status. UNICEF and the national structure for the demobilization and reintegration of child-soldiers will ensure the effective implementation of child soldier DDR activities. The World Food Programme will provide food assistance to ex-combatants in the Demobilization Centers. Several partners will be contracted to assist with the implementation of planned reintegration activities.

The program is financed by a USD 42 million grant from the Multi-donor Trust Fund of the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP), by a USD 33 million World Bank grant, a counterpart contribution from the Government of Burundi and a complementary USD 6 million bilateral contribution from the German Government.

The MDRP Trust Fund is also financing a project for the Demobilization, Reintegration and Recruitment Prevention of Child Soldiers in Burundi in the amount of US\$3.5 million. The Ministry for Institutional Reform, Human Rights and Parliamentary Relations, is implementing this project with technical assistance from UNICEF, and in close coordination with the NCDRR.

The MDRP is a World Bank managed regional partnership initiative in support of the demobilization, reinsertion and reintegration of ex-combatants in the greater Great Lakes region of Africa. Donors contributing to the MDRP Trust Fund are Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the European Commission.

For additional information on the Burundi DDRP, please visit:

http://www.mdrp.org/countries/mdrp_burundi.htm

For additional information on the MDRP, please visit:

<http://www.mdrp.org/>

For additional information on World Bank operations in Burundi, please visit:

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