



## **EAC critical to Burundi`s economic growth - official**

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By Emmanuel Kihale

Burundi`s membership in the East African Community would help the country`s newly elected government to revamp its ailing economy that was battered by many years of civil conflicts.

A high-ranking official of the CNDD-FDD government-elect, Radjab Hussein, told reporters in Dar es Salaam yesterday that the gains made towards lasting peace in the tiny Central African nation would be consolidated with admission to the EAC economic bloc.

After the country successfully held peaceful elections last month – the first ever-democratic polls since 1994 when it was plunged into bloodbath pitting the ethnic Hutu against the Tutsi – the international community sighed with relief when outgoing President Domitien Ndayizaye, conceded poll loss and pledged to hand over the reins of power to his successor.

During the polls, CNDD-FDD prevailed over its rivals with an overwhelming majority to earn the right to form the next government.

‘Burundi is a poor country in terms of (economic) development. Support from our neighbours and the international community would help us to stand on our own,’ Hussein said.

He said that the peaceful elections should not be interpreted as the end of the problems the country faces.

‘This is just the beginning of lasting peace and security that would in turn ensure economic recovery.

That`s why we have formerly applied to join the East African Community,’ he added.

The CNDD-FDD official said that free movement and labour in the EAC region would spur economic growth and prop the fragile peace in Burundi and Rwanda.

This, he said, would thus boost trade and social relations among the people in the region.

‘Some people in the region have close social links and what separates them are the arbitrary political borders so this would be a good thing for Burundians and the rest of East Africans,’ he said.

Hussein added that the co-operation among the countries in the Great Lakes Region

would also foster peace and security in countries emerging civil strife.

Besides, he said, Burundi as a landlocked country that needs access to the ports along the Indian Ocean coast such as the Dar es Salaam and Mombasa to export and import goods.

CNDD-FDD spokesperson, Karenga Ramadhani, appealed for international support for the new government enable it to lay a firm foundation for democracy.

‘Burundi is poor and we ask for support to train our army and police force. Both are indispensable in upholding the rule of law and order,’ he said.

Ramadhani who is also the Chief of Protocol of the current Burundi Minister of State (Good Governance), also asked for international support in uniting the political factions in the country, which he said were a threat to the future of democracy in the country.

Pierre Nkurunziza is expected to be endorsed as the country’s next president by the senate and cabinet on August 19 and sworn in as president on August 26.

\* SOURCE: Guardian